

PIERRE AND HIS POODLE

BY ELIZABETH
W. CHAMPNEY



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Pierre and His Poodle





PIERRE BIDS MINKA GOODBYE

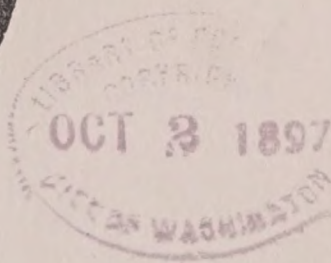
Pierre and His Poodle

By

ELIZABETH W. CHAMPNEY

*Author of "Witch Winnie," "Paddy O'Leary and
His Learned Pig," etc.*

With Illustrations by F. D. Steele



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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. AN ELOPEMENT	I
II. PIERRE GOES IN SEARCH OF POPOTTE	26
III. THE ADVENTURES OF POPOTTE AND ZULU	45
IV. PIERRE ENTERS THE SERVICE OF THE LION-TAMER	64
V. THE EVIL EYE	90
VI. AT ROBINSON CRUSOE'S TOWN . . .	113
VII. OF THE WICKED SCHEMES OF SIGNOR STROMBOLI	145
VIII. THE SWAMP ADDER AND THE PIL- GRIMAGE PARDON	167
IX. THE CHANTILLY RACES.—THE CHARM RECOILS	195

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
Pierre bids Minka good-bye	<i>Frontispiece</i> ✓
Popotte meets Zulu	7 ✓
Rigolette and Rigolo	17 ✓
Rigolette	25 ✓
Pierre sees many Wonderful Sights at the Fête des Loges	38 ✓
Signor Stromboli and his Van	50 ✓
Pierre makes the Tiger's Toilet	68 ✓
The Lion-tamer rescues Pierre	110 ✓
Minka makes a Perilous Leap	141 ✓
Nagy Pal	144 ✓
Signor Stromboli in Disguise	161 ✓
Signor Stromboli	166 ✓
Minka seeks Popotte by Night	175 ✓

Chapter 1



IF Popotte and Zulu had not fallen in love almost at first sight, and made up their minds to elope together, the series of strange adventures consequent on this inconsiderate act would not have befallen them, and this story would never have been written.

Popotte and Zulu were two French poodles, but in widely differing stations in life. Zulu was a genius in his way, affectionate, unselfish, and faithful to the death; but he was as black, and as ignorant of good society, as the Africans for whom he was named, and his master was the gypsy proprietor of a troupe of performing dogs: while Popotte was a

pampered little aristocrat, with a valet to comb her silky white hair, to care for her collars and ribbons, her little coats and overshoes. She had a velvet cushion on a gilded tabaret in the grand salon, close beside the *fauteuil* of the Marquise; she was allowed to come to the table at dessert and to receive her *canard* (a lump of sugar dipped in black coffee) from the Marquise's own jewelled fingers. She lapped her bouillon from a Dresden cup; slept at night on a pad stuffed with down under the bed of her master, the young Marquis; and was as certain of the divine right of some dogs to be petted and spoiled, and of the fitness of their turning up their noses at base-born curs, as her master was of the divine right of kings to rule, and of the old *noblesse* of France to feel that they were made of a finer clay than ordinary mortals. She was supersensitive and nervous, as well as fastidious: a discord in music would make her weep; a bad odour would make her ill; and the sight of a tramp in tatters would give her a fit. On the only occasion on which she had travelled with the family, Popotte had given them great annoyance by always insisting on the most luxurious surroundings. At one hotel it happened that

the St. Angels had not been able to secure the best rooms, as they were already occupied by a prince. Popotte passed the door of this apartment with great reluctance, and one day deserted her master's rooms and coolly curled herself upon the satin cushions of the pet armchair of Monsieur le Prince. She was ignominiously expelled by that potentate, and the St. Angels judged it best to leave her at the château during their subsequent journeys.

Popotte was an accomplished dog, and, like many another amateur, she had an exaggerated idea of her own talents. She was lazy, but she was also greedily fond of candy and could be tempted to exertion by the rattle of bonbons in Ludovic's silver *bonbonnière*. In this way she had been taught to beg, to waltz slowly and gravely, to carry objects, and to perform other tricks at command. She had been so much praised and petted that she considered herself the most admirable creature in the world; and it will be seen that her affection for Zulu must have been very strong indeed to have caused her to desert her luxurious home, forget all class distinctions, and adopt as her motto, — "All for love, and the world well lost."

Popotte's meeting with her lover occurred on the occasion of her young master's fête, or rather the fête of Saint Ludovic, for whom the young Marquis de St. Angel was named. In France the fête day of one's patron saint is always celebrated instead of one's own birthday, so that this was practically Ludovic's birthday. He was nine years old, — a handsome, lovable boy, all gaiety and courtesy, and delighted with the prospect of a party for his young friends in the garden and park of the château. The garden had been laid out in the formal style of Louis XIV., with a balustraded terrace overlooking the river, and long, straight walks bordered with *parterres à broderie*, or carpet-like designs of scrolls of box and foliage plants set in white sand and red brick dust, and ornamented at regular intervals with glistening white urns. It was stately and brilliant, but Ludovic liked better the forest park, with its old trees with their mysterious shadows, and the rabbits which darted across his path and scuttled away at his approach. A broad avenue led from the garden through the forest to a little open-air theatre, where Ludovic's ancestors of a hundred years ago had acted the plays of Molière for their own amusement. It con-

sisted of a small oval amphitheatre, walled in by a tall hedge, facing a terraced stage whose side scenes were natural trees and shrubs, with a rocky cliff as a "back drop." Weeds had grown in the dress-circle, the stone benches were covered with moss, and the artificial cascade of former days no longer tumbled down the cliff; but it was a favourite haunt of Ludovic's, and he loved to declaim from the stage to an imaginary audience. It was here, too, that Pierre, who was Popotte's valet, would train the poodle to perform the tricks for which she was so remarkable.

Pierre was only two years older than the young Marquis. He was the huntsman's son, but had been promoted from the kennels to stay at the château and care for Popotte. He was fond of dogs, over whom he had wonderful control, and he seemed actually to understand their language. If Pierre threw on the ground the chocolates of which she was so fond, exclaiming, "See, Popotte, these are for any poor little tramp dog that may happen to come along, *c'est la charité vous comprenez*," Popotte would elevate her snub nose to a ridiculous angle and turn contemptuously away. But when Pierre called her

back, exclaiming, "This is a banquet, Popette, for my most distinguished friends, — for Madame la Princesse and Monsieur le Duc, and they have invited you, Popotte; it is a great honour," then you should have seen Popotte caper joyously forward, and make haste to devour the entire banquet.

Ludovic had decided that he would amuse his young friends at his fête by putting Popotte through her tricks in the open-air theatre, and had not thought of anything more elaborate in the way of entertainment until a few days before it took place, when it chanced that, in driving with his mother, he had noticed a curious encampment by the roadside.

It consisted of a van, or small house, on wheels, decorated with a sign which announced it to be the home of Nagy Pal (or Paul Nagy, for in the Hungarian language the surname follows the family one), trainer and showman of performing dogs. Several small terriers and a *griffon* were tethered to the wheels of the van and barked loudly as the carriage stopped. A dark man and a girl with a frowsy head slouched from the interior of the van and regarded the carriage and its occupants with a broad stare. Popotte,



POPOTTE MEETS ZULU.

who was seated beside her young master, barked shrilly, nearly springing from the carriage in her excitement, and a large poodle, whose curly hair was cut *en lion*, the only dog that was wandering about at large, trotted forward and wagged his pompon of a tail amicably. Though black by nature, he was grey with dust and thin from meagre fare; his matted hair half hid his fiery red eyes, and, with his stiff mustache and generally bohemian disreputable air, he bore an amusing resemblance to his master. He was plainly one of those "tramp dogs" for whom Popotte had been taught that charity should be reserved, and not a fit companion for her ladyship, but he had no appreciation of the difference in their stations, and continued mutely to wag his tail, and he bounded joyously when, at Ludovic's earnest solicitation, the coachman drew rein, and Ludovic asked when and where the troupe would give its next performance. The man replied that he was on his way to the fête of St.-Germain, and he gave Ludovic some handbills setting forth the attractions which he would offer on that occasion. As they drove away the black poodle barked hoarsely, and ran after the carriage until his master called him back

sternly, when he remained standing, watching them out of sight with a disappointed air. He had evidently thought that Popotte was a new arrival, and had given her a hospitable welcome, plainly showing that he was ready to take her under his protection, despite her aristocratic airs. Popotte, too, with the coquettishness characteristic of her sex, though she had bristled with indignation at his approach, now that she was being borne rapidly away from him whined and tugged at her leash, manifesting a perverse desire to dash back to her new acquaintance.

Ludovic held her tightly and read the playbill. It announced wonderful feats by the trained dogs, including the acting of a little play.

Ludovic was enchanted, and begged to be allowed to attend the fête at St.-Germain, and the Marquise readily promised that he should do so. It occurred to her also that it would be a pleasant feature of the festival with which she intended to celebrate her son's birthday to have the mountebank bring his dogs and give a performance for the children in the out-of-door theatre; and Pierre was sent that evening to the gypsy's camp to make all the

arrangements. Pierre found the girl preparing supper in a kettle which was hung over a little fire. The black poodle barked loudly at his approach, and the girl seemed as little inclined to welcome him.

"Be off with you!" she exclaimed, as she saw that Pierre was not afraid of the poodle. "The dog is very savage; he always bites strangers."

"He will not bite me," Pierre replied, patting the poodle. "I like dogs, and they like me."

"Well, I am not a dog, and I do not like you, so go all the same."

"Will you bite me if I stay?" Pierre asked mischievously. "Your supper smells delicious. If there is anything that I like it is fricasseed rabbit. You might be hospitable and give me some, especially as I am sure that it is one of our rabbits you have in that kettle. My father is the *garde-chasse* at the château, and he found traces of a poacher in the park this morning."

The girl ran toward him with a ladle filled with the hot stew. "I will give it to you," she cried; "never fear but I will give it to you — in your face — impudent one."

"There, there, you sweet-tempered angel,"

Pierre replied mockingly, capering round the fire and managing to keep just out of her reach. "Your fricassee will burn if you do not pay attention to it. And calm yourself, courteous one; I did not come on account of the rabbit, but with a message of quite another nature for your father."

"Then stand still and deliver your message," said a gruff voice behind him; and Pierre, turning, found himself confronted by Nagy Pal, who held a board on which he had just stretched the rabbit skin, which he scorned to hide. Pierre thought it politic not to appear to notice this proof of the origin of the supper, and forthwith entered into negotiation for the performance, to such good effect that the evening before the fête the mountebank's cart drove into the park and encamped behind the little theatre. Pierre met them at the lodge-gate and led the way to the place assigned for the encampment. While the dog trainer was busy unharnessing his horse, Pierre brought from the bushes two rabbits, which he had previously placed there, and presented them to the girl with the compliments of the Marquise, who, he said, was fearful that Nagy Pal might injure himself in one of the man-traps which were hidden in

the forest. Minka, for this was the girl's name, thrust out her tongue at Pierre by way of thanks, and assured him that if he had been telling tales about poaching, his own neck was in more danger than her father's legs. Pierre scampered away, grinning and gibing, Minka returning his grimaces with others still more extraordinary.

"She has no manners," Pierre said to himself; "she is utterly detestable."

Nevertheless, after dinner he strolled near the spot, and hearing some wild sweet music, secreted himself in the shrubbery and listened. Minka and her father were seated by their camp fire, playing on violins and singing Hungarian songs. Pierre could not understand a word, but the melody fascinated him. He did not show himself, for fear they would cease playing and singing, but he remained crouched motionless, listening acutely until the little concert ceased.

Early the next morning Ludovic, Pierre, and Popotte visited the theatre and assisted at a rehearsal. Ludovic was most interested in the feats of a pretty *griffon* named Rigollette, and a lithe, slender Danish terrier named Rigolo. Pierre, in spite of his fondness for dogs, found himself looking about

for the little spitfire Minka. As she did not appear on the stage, he slipped out of the theatre and found her giving an acrobatic performance quite by herself. She wore trunk hose, like a professional gymnast, and was practising on a trapeze which her father had swung from the limb of a high tree. Pierre watched her for some time in astonishment. She hung by one hand, by her heels, by her chin; she recovered herself and leaped and turned and swung in the most blood-chilling and dangerous way. At length, at a particularly startling feat, he could contain himself no longer, but gave a cry of fright. Minka bounded to the ground, gave three back springs, and laughed in his face. "That is nothing," she said. "You should see my teacher perform; your heart would be in your mouth all the time."

"Are you going to do that before the company this afternoon?" Pierre asked.

"Oh, no!" Minka replied. "I am not expert enough to perform in public yet. I am studying to be an *équilibriste*, and one of these days I shall make my *début* in the *Cirque d'Été*; but father says it is a great mistake to appear until one has thoroughly learned one's profession. He is very ambi-

tious for me, and believes I have talent. You despised me; you thought I was only a tramp. One of these days, when you are still only a servant, you will see I shall have a great career — There, your master is calling you, stupid! Stop staring at me and go away!”

Ludovic had called Pierre to show off Popotte, and she now went through her little *répertoire* with great credit, eliciting many compliments from the dog trainer, who offered to take her for a few months and educate her. This Ludovic would not think of, though the man was evidently skilled in his profession, — his own dogs acting their parts with marvellous exactitude. It seemed to Ludovic that such implicit obedience could not have been obtained without cruelty, and, when the master cracked his little snake-like whip, every member of the lithe troupe would cringe and shiver in abject fright. The exhibition in the afternoon was a great success. The weather was perfect, and the young Marquis, in gala attire, received the children at the château, and then conducted them through the beautiful garden, down the avenue arched by noble forest trees, to the little theatre. Here Popotte introduced the performance by executing a

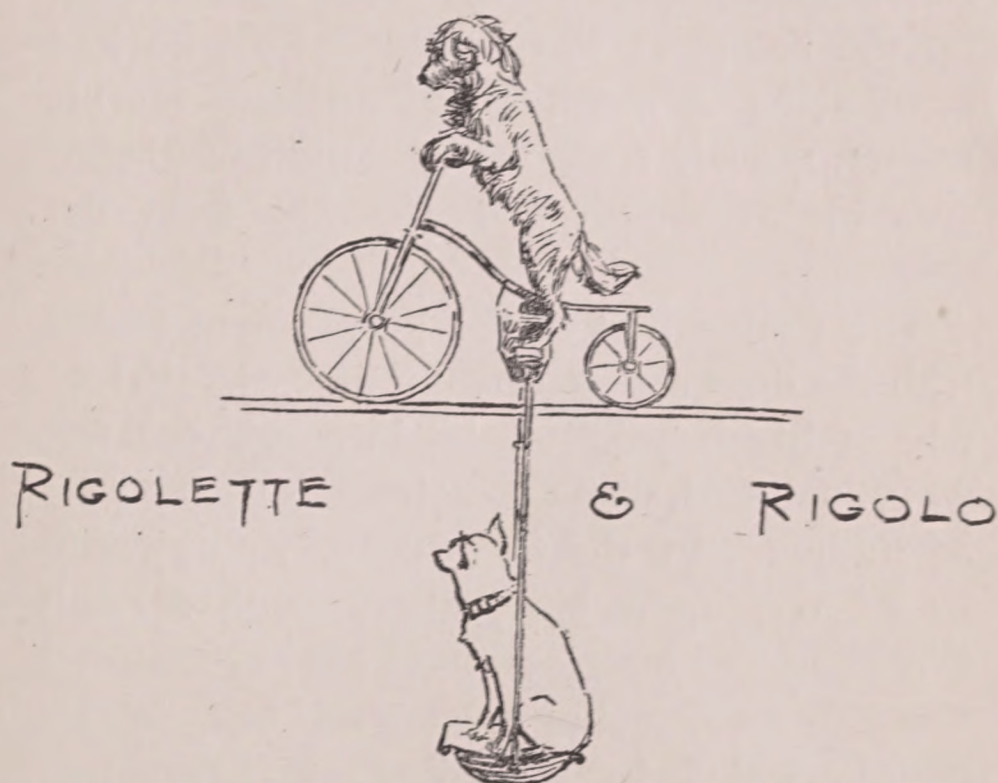
ballet dance. A ruffle of tarlatan represented the dancer's brief skirts, and her collar and her top-knot were tied with exaggerated bows of light blue ribbon, while bracelets of the same decorated her fore paws. Popotte usually danced to an accompaniment by Pierre on a mouth organ; but Nagy Pal had tried her at the rehearsal with his violin, and, the result having proved satisfactory, he arranged that she should be accompanied by his "dog orchestra." Four of the dogs sat on the terrace just below the stage, and made a most comical pretence of performing upon different instruments with sheets of music upon stands before them. A fox terrier had a trombone which he gravely sucked, his paws beating a noiseless pit-pat on the holes, while Rigolo stood upright beside a stringless 'cello, and Rigolette nimbly frisked about, executing marvellous feats of agility with her fore paws on the keyboard of a toy piano, which, however, gave forth no sound. Zulu, the great black poodle, with his paws covered with padded gloves, solemnly struck the drum at intervals. He was the only member of the orchestra whose performance was *bona fide*, the other

parts being rendered by Nagy Pal and his daughter, who played their violins behind the scenes.

Popotte danced with great dignity; she could not see the dog orchestra, or she might have been diverted from the execution of her part, but she never lost sight of Pierre's lifted finger as he stood in the wings, and she pirouetted and curtseyed and glided with a sense of the grave importance of the occasion, only once resting her tired back by dropping upon her fore paws. When, at the close of her performance, Ludovic tossed her a bouquet, she caught it in her mouth and waddled from the stage in a tempest of applause. Zulu's shaggy head alone had appeared above the level of the stage floor, and he had watched her with such interest that he had failed to come in at the proper intervals with his "boom-er-um-a-boom," and when she left the stage in triumph he sprang after her, regardless of his padded feet, gambolling about her with every expression of doggish admiration and congratulation.

After this the dogs of the troupe gave an exhibition of their accomplishments. Rigo-

lette walked up a flight of tiny steps on her hind legs, and then came down again on her fore feet, at the same time balancing a lighted lamp on her little head. She then rode on a bicycle across a horizontal bar, and the aston-



ishment and applause were immense when Nagy Pal attached a swing to the bicycle, into which Rigolo sprang and was conveyed across the stage.

Then the dogs ate with due decorum at a banquet, where they were served by Zulu in

a cook's cap and apron. This last was too much for Popotte, who had been watching the performance with acute professional jealousy, and who now, scenting sugar, leaped from Ludovic's arms, bounded upon the stage, and helped herself to the dainties, breaking up the banquet; whereupon Zulu, who had often acted as monitor and assistant for his master, gravely took one of Popotte's fringed ears in his mouth and led her from the stage.

The canine part of the programme ended with the dogs acting a pantomime, the "Tragedy of Bluebeard." Zulu, in a crimson fez, was Bluebeard, while Rigolette took the part of Fatima. In the first scene, Zulu, ready to set out upon his journey, with a small travelling-bag hanging about his neck, trotted forward with a huge wooden key in his mouth, which he deposited at the feet of Rigolette, at the same time barking gruffly. In the second scene some puppets draped in cotton shrouds spotted with red flannel blood stains, were hung against the wall to represent the dead wives, while Rigolette, having made a round of inspection, fainted in due form. Then Zulu rushed wildly

in and shook the little dog roughly, until Rigolo and the fox terrier, who took the part of the two brothers, arrived upon the scene, Rigolo carrying a small gun, which he pointed at Zulu, who, at a pistol-shot fired behind the scene by the dog-trainer, immediately dropped in feigned death, and Rigolette, springing to her feet, capered for joy. Then Rigolo and the fox terrier rushed from the stage, and returned harnessed as horses to a small hearse. Nagy Pal lifted Zulu by one hind leg to show that he was really dead, and then threw him into the hearse and he was carried from the stage, Rigolette waddling after the hearse with her fore paws covering her face, which was bowed in hypocritical grief.

Immense applause following this little play, Nagy Pal and his daughter came forward, and, having bowed their acknowledgments, played several Hungarian gypsy tunes upon their violins, and sang some of their weird songs. The Marquise was much pleased by Minka's voice, which had something touchingly pathetic in its quality. The Marquise applauded the young singer again and again, and Minka sang as an encore an old French

song, "Si j'étais petit oiseau." "If I were a little bird," ran the song, "I would fly to the prison towers where languish the poor captives, and hiding my wings lest, seeing them, their homesick hearts might be filled with longing, I would sing and sing, till one would smile, and another dream upon his pallet of the green fields near his birth-place."

Ludovic's mother beckoned Minka to her. "You have a remarkable voice, my child," she said, "and I am strangely drawn to you. Would you like to come and live with me and study music, if your father is willing?"

But Minka scowled. "My father would not consent, and I would not come if he did. I do not want to study music; I am going to be a famous gymnast some day, and perform in a circus."

The Marquise pressed a coin into the child's hand. "Be a good girl," she said, "whatever happens; and if you ever change your mind, let me know." Then, rising, the lady led her son's friends to the château, where a supper had been provided for them in the great dining-room. The Marquise ordered

one of the servants to fill a basket with ices, cake, and fruit, and told Pierre to take it to Minka. The girl received the gift ungraciously: "Your Marquise is a very ignorant person," she said to Pierre. "She has no appreciation of an artistic career. She to think that I would give up my vocation, sacrifice my genius, to come here and live with her! Bah! her supercilious airs make me sick. She is as stupid as your rag of a dog. What presumption to attempt to exhibit such an imbecile by the side of my father's educated animals! It is a mere mass of white cotton, a mop, a swab of wool, good only to clean the windows, a thing without intelligence, *un rien du tout*, who is not worth two cents."

"Stop," said Pierre, authoritatively. "You may mock at me all you choose, but you shall not insult my mistress or Popotte, who are both of the noblest blood that exists."

"All sham," the girl insisted, "as false as those red stones in that cheap iron setting, that trickle like blood drops on her white neck and bosom."

"The St. Angel rubies false? I tell you,

ignorant one, that necklace was given to my mistress's grandmother by Marie Antoinette, and they were given to her by her mother, Maria Theresa of Austria; they are famed all over France."

"What?" said Nagy Pal, who had taken no part in the conversation. "That must have been the necklace which the Hungarian gypsies gave the Empress of Austria when the Hungarians made her their king!"

"How could a woman be a king?" Pierre asked.

"As for that, I do not know; but I know of the necklace, for my mother has told me of it. The stones were a part of the crown jewels of our own king when the gypsies were a people with a country, long before there was any France. An old people are the Rommany, older than the Jews. And their country was a far country, — farther than the land of the Moors, and farther than Egypt, even the land of the Chaldees."

"Why did the gypsies give their jewels to this woman king?" Minka asked.

"A curse had been upon us for many years," Nagy Pal replied. "When we were driven out from our country the crown was

broken up and divided among many clans; but they brought the jewels together and gave them to Maria Theresa, for there was a prophecy that when a woman was made king the gypsies would find a home. It was a lie, for we wander still. It is well that the rubies look like drops of blood, for the gypsies gave them to Maria Theresa as a sign that they would willingly shed their blood in her behalf. They are set in iron because the gypsies have no gold, nor are any of them goldsmiths; but they are the finest blacksmiths in the world."

"Then, if gypsies made that necklace," said Minka, "it should belong to gypsies, and not to a French woman."

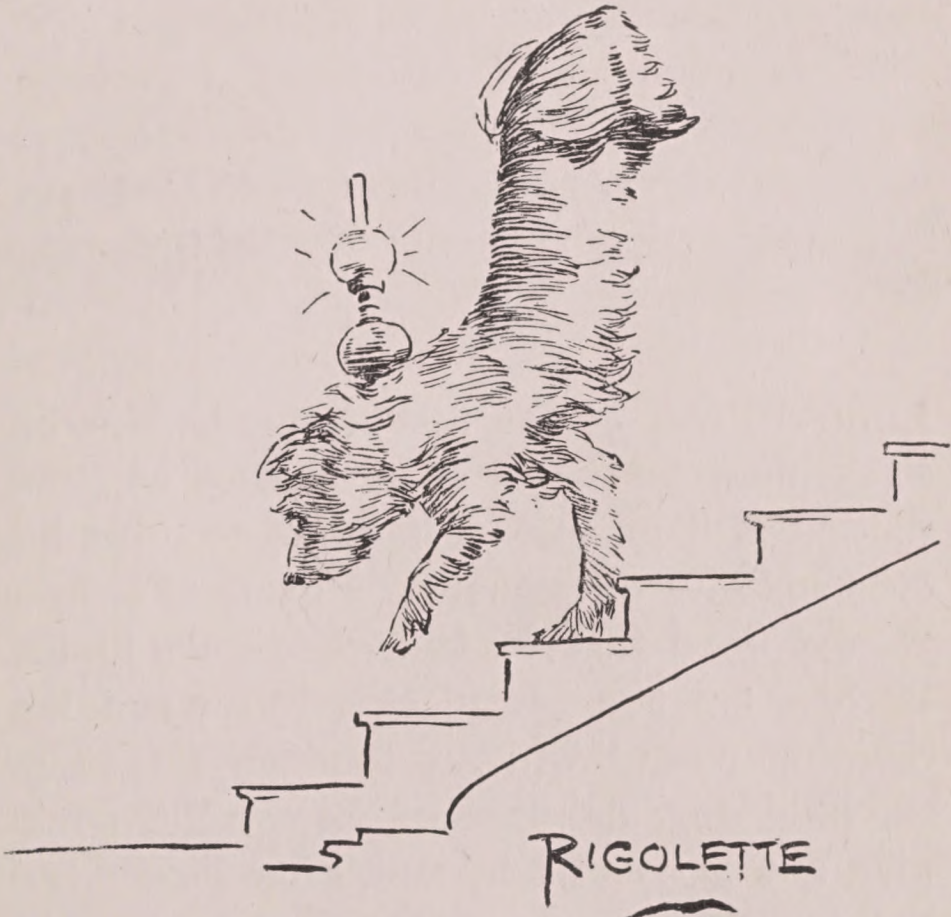
Nagy Pal replied, but in the language which Pierre did not understand, and he walked away to the main avenue, where carriages were beginning to arrive with parents, nurses, and *bonnes* to fetch the children home.

Ludovic, wearied but happy with his day's enjoyment, waved him a glad good-night, and climbed the great stone staircase to his bedroom. Popotte limped along at his side; she was weary, too, and glad to curl

herself up on the pad under the head of her master's bed. Nevertheless when, an hour later, she heard a confused barking in front of the château, she sprang up, pushed open the long French windows, and, thrusting her nose through the iron work of the balcony railing, barked shrilly in reply. It was the mountebank's van leaving the château grounds, and when Zulu heard Popotte's voice he leaped from the waggon and presented himself like another Romeo under his Juliet's balcony.

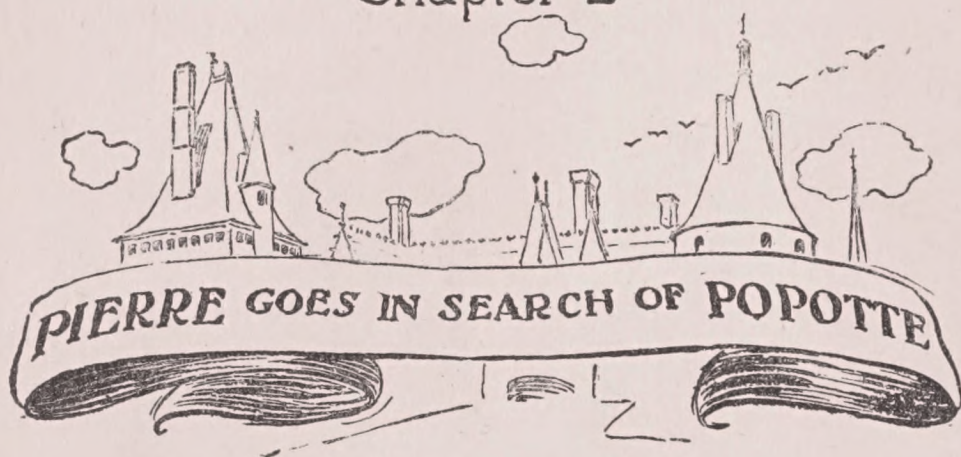
"Down, Popotte!" said Ludovic, sleepily. "Lie down and stop barking!" And Popotte slunk obediently back to her mat and all was still. But she had seen the shadowy form of Zulu beneath the balcony; she heard him barking a disconsolate farewell on the terrace, and she suddenly realised that he was going away, and that he was altogether the most admirable dog that she had ever met. When Zulu barked, "Good-bye, dear Popotte; I go, but I will never forget you; I love you, Popotte," — the little canine Juliet could not withstand her lover's howls, but pattered softly down the long staircase and into the deserted salon. Here she examined all the

windows until she found one ajar, when, on a briefer acquaintance than her human prototype, she inconsiderately eloped with her Romeo.



RIGOLETTE

Chapter 2



LUDOVIC was not at first alarmed when, on awakening, he found that Popotte was not waiting with impatience for him to open his eyes and give the signal for a game of romps. He supposed that she had gone down to the kitchen for her breakfast. But when the morning passed without the appearance of the little dog, and none of the servants could give any news of her, and even Pierre and the gamekeeper could not find her on the grounds, suspicion began to attach itself to the dog-trainer. Indeed, so positive was the Marquise that Popotte had been stolen that she sent the gamekeeper to inform the local authorities and to have the man arrested.

What was her surprise when, a little later, Nagy Pal himself appeared, asserting that he had lost a dog; that Zulu, the best actor in his troupe, was missing, and must have remained on the grounds of the château. So certain was the man of his own right that he was even disagreeable, implying that some one had concealed his dog wilfully, and demanding that every outbuilding should be searched. During the altercation the gamekeeper returned with a gendarme, who took the man in custody. He led the way fearlessly to his van, which was found encamped on the road to St.-Germain. He said that he had driven all night in order to gain time for the fête, which opened that afternoon, but had halted for breakfast and to rest his horse, and had not until then discovered the absence of Zulu. The officer of the law made a thorough search of the van, and neither Popotte nor Zulu were to be found. It was possible, of course, that Nagy Pal had left them with some accomplice on the way; but his voluntary return to the château, instead of taking the chance of not being discovered, was not explainable on the supposition that he was guilty. Accordingly, after much deliberation, the mountebank was liberated. But, infuri-

ated by his unjust persecution, as well as by the loss of his valuable dog, he insisted on his part that the château and its grounds should be searched for Zulu. This the Marquise ordered should be done, and the gendarme, accompanied by the dog-trainer and by the game-keeper and Pierre, made a thorough examination of the place without result, and parted with mutual disgust and recrimination. Pierre could not be persuaded that Nagy Pal had not stolen Popotte, and was of the opinion that he had returned with this cry of injured innocence to put them all off the track. He argued the matter with Ludovic and with his father, who admitted that this might be the case. Ludovic was nearly wild with grief. He would accept neither hope nor consolation, and even refused to eat. When his mother adopted the opinion of the gendarme, that the dog-trainer had not stolen Popotte, Ludovic was convinced that his pet was dead. "I heard her barking in the night," he said. "I believe that she discovered a thief prowling about the house, and that the man killed her to keep her from rousing us all, and has concealed her body."

When asked to explain Zulu's disappearance

on this hypothesis, he declined to interest himself in it.

"I don't care what has become of all the other dogs in the world. My Popotte is dead, I am certain of it; and the faithful little creature died in defending us all."

The tears came to honest Pierre's eyes as he witnessed his little master's grief. "Popotte is not dead," he said; "I am sure of it. If she were, we should have found her body. I still believe that that rogue of a dog-trainer and his insufferable daughter have stolen her on account of her talents, and later, in some distant place, they will exhibit her with their dogs. They are bad people. They stole a rabbit from the park, and, oh, Monsieur Ludovic, look in your mother's jewel casket, and see if her ruby necklace is safe, for I believe they meant to steal that." Ludovic unlocked a cabinet and took out the morocco case in which the necklace was kept. It was there, and while the boys were looking at it the Marquise passed through the room and snatched it from Pierre's hands so suddenly that one of the pendants caught on a button of his jacket and was broken off. He handed it back to her, and Pierre explained why they were looking at it; but the Marquise was evi-

dently much displeased. Ludovic followed Pierre to the edge of the park, apologising for his mother's *brusquerie*, and Pierre, in his turn, endeavoured to console Ludovic for the loss of Popotte. "Where she is now," he said, "I do not know; but I will find her, Monsieur le Marquis, of that be assured. Do not disquiet yourself; I am going away, and though I have to tramp all over France, I will find Popotte."

The boys were alone, and Ludovic threw his arms around Pierre's neck. "Oh, good, noble Pierre!" he exclaimed, "what will I not do for you if you succeed! Here, take my purse; there are two gold-pieces in it which my godmother gave me yesterday."

Pierre shook his head and pushed them from him. "I have two stout legs to travel with," he said, "and I can do odd jobs for my food. I will not take your money."

"Not for yourself, Pierre," Ludovic pleaded, "but for Popotte. You might have a chance to buy her back; or, having found her, could come back more quickly by train," and he pressed the purse persistently into Pierre's hand. "Not for myself, but for Popotte," the other repeated reluctantly, and hurried away to his home at the kennels. Here he ex-

plained his theory once more to his father, who listened taciturnly. "I am going to the fête of St.-Germain," said Pierre, "and I shall hang around until I see Popotte exhibited."

"They will never dare show her so near to us as that," said Pierre's mother.

"*N'importe*, I can follow the waggon to the next fête."

"You will have your trouble for your pains," said Pierre's father. "You will not find her."

"Pierre is no imbecile," his mother replied, bridling; "and if he does find the dog the Marquise will reward him well. Go, my son, and the saints preserve you! Here is a medal with the head of the blessed Saint Roch. It will preserve you from the bites of savage dogs and from robbers. But take care of yourself all the same. Do not let the dog-trainer see you at first, or he may recognise you and suspect your errand." The good woman bustled about, wrapping some cheese in a bit of paper, and insisted on his carrying with him a loaf of bread long enough to have served as a pilgrim's staff.

The gamekeeper said not a word against the enterprise. He was considering ponderously that there were other sons at home to

help him, whose mouths must be filled, and that, as Pierre would now lose his salary as care-taker of Popotte, it was just as well that he should launch out for himself. When his son took his hand to bid him good-bye he rose heavily, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and said, not unkindly, "You will not find the dog, but you may find something better. If you do, don't trouble yourself to come back. It is a dog's life, among dogs, that your father leads, and there is nothing better for you here."

But Pierre's mother walked with him as far as the gatekeeper's lodge, where she threw her arms around him and sobbed as though she foresaw that she was losing him for ever. "If you do not find Popotte, come back all the same," she said. "The young Marquis will soon be consoled for his pet, but I cannot live without my boy."

And Pierre answered kindly and confidently, "Never fear, mother; I shall come back, and I shall find Popotte."

One of the gatekeeper's children told Pierre that Nagy Pal had passed about an hour before, driving in the direction of Paris. This surprised Pierre greatly, as he had supposed that the dog-trainer would go to St.-Germain;

but the child was positive, and Pierre followed on foot. He walked so rapidly that, thanks to a pause which Nagy Pal made at a wayside inn, he caught sight of the van just as it was halted at the *octroi*, or custom-house, at the entrance of the city. But the official had completed his examination, and the van jolted inside the fortifications, and Pierre speedily lost sight of it among the numerous vehicles passing in different directions. The boy was utterly tired out and quite discouraged, but an idea suddenly occurred to him. The customs officer had looked through the *roulette*: he would know whether Popotte was inside; and Pierre returned to the *octroi* and told his story. The officer heard him kindly, but assured him that there was no white poodle, either among the dogs, which occupied a sort of cage in the rear part of the van, or in the front part, which served as living room for Nagy Pal and his daughter. He told Pierre that the dog-trainer had said that he was on his way to the *Marché aux Chiens* (dog-market) to purchase a dog to take the part of one he had lost, and that he was then going to St.-Germain, where his partner, the proprietor of a puppet theatre, was awaiting him.

Pierre sat quietly thinking the matter over. The van had now been *twice* searched by officers of the law, and he felt convinced that if Popotte had been within she would have been discovered. It therefore seemed useless for him to follow the dog-trainer farther. Still Pierre was not certain that Nagy Pal had not stolen Popotte and given her to some confederate. How about this partner at St.-Germain? The train filled with people bound for the fête passed this very point, and Pierre, still weary, but no longer discouraged, clambered on board.

The *Fête des Loges* is one of the most frequented of the fêtes held in the environs of Paris. It has been held for generations past in the grand old forest of St.-Germain, and opens on the 23d of August, closing on midnight of September first. Pierre found the various booths of this strange city of mountebanks set up in the heart of the forest, through which a magnificent avenue leads from the front of the old château. The glades and dells, once the haunt of the stag and boar, were alive with thousands of people, and the long avenue was thronged with every imaginable vehicle. Great barges transported hordes of Cook's tourists. Elegant carriages brought

such of the fashionable world as had not deserted Paris for the seashore; *tapissières* with gaily striped curtains had been hired by family parties of the *bourgeoisie*, parties of jolly students tooting horns and wearing enormous straw hats marched in company, and cyclists, both the male and the female variety, hardly distinguishable from the similarity of their costumes, darted like gleaming minnows between shoals of larger fish. *Ces beaux militaires* enlivened the road with their brilliant uniforms, and the omnivorous Parisian *fiacre* and omnibus poured in a heterogeneous mass of humanity. More amusing still to watch the queer vehicles which brought the peasants from a distance, harvest-waggon loaded with merry troops of young men and maidens and white-capped children.

The scene, especially at night, when rows of coloured lanterns were stretched between the mossy trunks of the old trees, was fairy-like. Banks of clay had been thrown up, making a protection from the wind, and against these great fires crackled and spits turned, roasting a dozen fowls at once for the open-air restaurants, which drove a thriving business. Before one of these a sign announcing "*lapin rôti*" (roast rabbit) was displayed in pathetic

neighbourhood to a pen of live bunnies frisking in blissful unconsciousness of their approaching fate. Vistas of divergent avenues opened on every hand, some lighted up in kaleidoscopic fashion by the flash of a car dashing in headlong haste down a *Montagne Russe* (roller coaster), or flitted across by small Ferris wheels and other swings tossing their occupants up to the tree-tops. There were gilded merry-go-rounds at frequent intervals whirling children about in complicated gyrations, wheels within wheels waltzing dizzily on rotary platforms, — all spinning in frantic haste to the blatant sound of calliope organs. There were rings running on wires, to which people clung and were carried as by flying machines through the air. There were acrobats tumbling on strips of carpet by the roadside, and strong men tossing heavy iron weights into the air and catching them as though they were the veriest playthings. There were dancers, both amateur and professional, and itinerant musicians singing and selling songs. Shooting galleries, with whole regiments of grotesque figures to be fired at, added to the din, and tempted crack shots with prizes of gaudily-painted vases. There were cake shops where white-

aproned cooks stood over their braziers, which diffused most appetising and mouth-watering odours as they turned their *gaufres* (waffles) and *crêpes* (griddle cakes). At certain stands *pain d'épice* (gingerbread) was sold in gilded rolls or cut into grotesque pigs on which the cook wrote your name in pink or green icing. One woman carried a sheaf of sticks to which were attached balloons in the shape of cows, truly Assyrian in their shape, but coloured as no Assyrian artist in the wildest flights of his untutored and untrammelled fancy could have imagined.

There was a hideously fat and misshapen man in pink tights, whose bare arms were tattooed in blue and who resembled some disgusting Chinese idol, who led a little donkey slowly about in a circle, announcing in a hoarse voice that if the audience would throw him a sufficient number of pennies they should laugh as they had never laughed in all their lives. His wife, an old woman, and also dressed as an acrobat, beat a small drum to attract the crowd. Pierre looked on for a long time in the hope of seeing some performance, but the crowd dispersed and another formed and still the fake performer did nothing but shout, "Madame, the ass and I



are going soon to amuse you. The ass knows the most. He knows arithmetic and can add and subtract; can tell the past and the future. Only ten more sous, generous patrons, and the performance will begin. Thanks, only eight more! Drum, Madame, drum!" and then the whole rigmarole would begin again. People took the imposition good-naturedly and moved on. Every one seemed out for a holiday, and determined to be gay, whatever happened or failed to happen.

All day long Pierre wandered about amidst the joyous hubbub without finding any trace of Popotte or of the dog-trainer. At last, just as sunset was giving a background of beaten gold to the trees, he recognised Nagy Pal's van as it lumbered slowly down the avenue and took its place behind a canvas tent, which served as auditorium and bore the sign, "*Variétés Amusantes.*" A clown, with chalked face spotted with vermilion, was beating a huge drum to attract patronage, and announcing a wonderful performance of marionnettes, The Miracle Play of Saint Antoine and his Blessed Pig. Pierre longed to go inside, especially as he saw that the dog-trainer had done so; but he dreaded to dimin-

ish too rapidly his little store of money, having already broken one of the coins at the railroad station. But a picture of performing dogs on the outside of the tent decided him, and he paid a sou, hoping that Popotte would make her first appearance on a professional stage.

He was doomed to disappointment. The puppets were very cleverly manipulated. They gave a debased rendering of one of the old miracle plays of the Middle Ages,¹ — the Temptation of Saint Anthony. The saint was shown in his hermitage with his pet companion, an intelligent pig. Lucifer appeared to him in different disguises and ineffectually endeavoured to induce him to leave his retreat. At intervals a chorus of demons danced weirdly among fireworks, singing their intention to burn the hermitage and roast the good saint and his pig.

But Saint Anthony remained firm, and was finally carried to heaven with his pig by a band of angels, while the demons sunk below the stage in a blaze of fireworks.

At the close of the performance Nagy Pal appeared and announced that he would give no regular exhibition for several days, but

¹ This play is described in "Witch Winnie in Paris."

would simply amuse them gratis by a few little exercises by his celebrated dogs Rigollette and Rigolo, as he was busy accomplishing the *dressage* (training) of an extremely clever dog who would make its *début* in a tragedy on the last day of the fête. It would be well for all interested to secure their tickets in advance, as double price would be charged for them on the day of the representation, and it might then even be impossible to obtain them at any price. Pierre wondered whether this new actor was the dog which Nagy Pal had purchased at the *Marché* to supply Zulu's place, or whether he referred to Popotte.

It was possible, he argued, that the trainer intended to show her on the last day of the fête in order to lessen the chances of detection, and to abscond immediately after her appearance. There was a bare chance of this, which made it seem advisable to Pierre for him to remain on the ground and to keep his eyes very wide open.

The first thing for him to do was to find some occupation by which he could support himself while acting his part as a detective. He wandered up and down the street on the

lookout for a sign equivalent to "Boy wanted," but nothing of the kind met his eye. There was every opportunity to spend money, but none of earning it. He stood fascinated before the booth of the serpent-charmer as she came for a moment on the little outside platform and gave a short free performance to tempt the crowd to follow her into the tent. She was dressed in span-gled gauze, with bangles on her bare arms, among which coiled, bracelet-like, two small snakes, while around her neck and over her bosom fell the heavy body of a huge boa-constrictor. She fondled this loathsome creature, kissing it, pressing its great head against her cheeks, and lifting it with both arms, now swaying it scarf-like while she danced gracefully, now coiling it like a sash about her lithe figure. Finally, to show that it was not stupefied from over eating, she placed it on the floor and set a live rabbit in front of it. The little animal shrank back trembling in an extremity of terror, but the snake lifted its head and so fascinated the poor creature that it made no attempt to fly but allowed itself to be strangled and swallowed.

“Coco has had his supper,” the serpent-charmer remarked cheerfully; “he will now take a good nap, but on the last evening of the fête he will be as hungry as ever, and he will swallow for you a dog, incredible as it may seem, — a poodle so large that you would fancy that even his head could not enter Coco’s jaws. Those who wish to assist at this astonishing repast, will do well to secure their places in advance. It will be a most remarkable feat. And now, ladies and gentlemen, if you would like to see me in my world-renowned tableau of the Medusa’s Head, copied from the celebrated picture of Leonardo da Vinci, in which tableau I have twenty poisonous reptiles coiled in my hair, you will be so good as to deposit the trifling sum of three cents with the doorkeeper, and I shall have the pleasure of filling your souls with horror and admiration.”

Pierre already felt the thrill of these contending emotions, but he did not respond to the invitation, and he felt that, even if he had not already determined on attending the début of the new dog on the last evening of the fête, nothing could have induced him to

see that disgusting reptile crush the life out of another innocent victim. But while making this resolve he little realised that the dog devoted to this terrible death was his own beloved Popotte.



Chapter 3

THE ADVENTURES OF POPOTTE

AND
ZULU



WHEN Popotte eloped with Zulu, although she was undoubtedly solicited by her lover to run away, the fault, as usually in elopements, was not entirely on one side. Popotte was utterly weary of her luxurious life of boredom, and longed for adventure. She was tired of having her silky hair combed every morning, and of her daily bath. Here was a dog whose matted hair proclaimed that he was seldom submitted to such grievances. True, her leash was a silken one, but it held her securely, while Zulu walked at large. Though in the company of actors he evi-

dently enjoyed more freedom than the rest. He was a travelled dog, and Popotte admired him as much for his broader experience as for his sturdy air of independence. He was a dog of the world, while she had been mewed behind nunnery walls. No matter if the society with which he had mingled had not always been of the choicest, apparently his life of the road and the fairs was more entertaining than hers of the salon. Something of this he had told her when he had complimented her on her dancing, when they chatted together in dog language behind the thicket scenes of the out-of-door theatre.

"You should adopt a professional life," said Zulu; "you are too talented for a mere amateur."

"So I have been told," Popotte replied condescendingly; "but what opportunity have I for the display of my abilities? My only chance of exhibiting my genius is to *faire le beau* (stand up, and beg) for some old dowager after dinner, who rewards me with lumps of sugar dipped in anisette, which I detest. You, on the contrary, are accustomed to acting before large and admiring audiences, even larger and more enthusiastic than this."

“My life is one continual fête,” Zulu admitted, “but I often sigh for refined companionship. The moment that you dawned upon our encampment in the dingle, I said when I saw the prancing horses, the satin-lined carriage with its armorial bearings on the panel, the servants in livery, your elegant and attentive master and mistress, — ‘Here is a dog who has every luxury in life, and for whom nothing is too good.’ ”

“You little realised,” interrupted Popotte, “how sick I am of all that luxury, how I envied you the wild freedom of the dingle. Do you ever chase rabbits?”

“Do I!” replied Zulu. “Why, I am fed so poorly that I should die but for my hunting. I have already killed three in this very park; but I first bring them to my master, who gives me my share. You have a very disagreeable gamekeeper, who caught me and beat me cruelly, whereby I understood that you do not extend the courtesies of *la chasse* to your guests.”

Popotte sighed. “These people have no manners; and figure to yourself that it is that man’s son who is my body-servant!”

“Does he beat you?” asked Zulu, sympathetically.

"No; on the contrary, he is fond of me, and I am so tired of having people adore me, — are not you?"

"It must be disagreeable," Zulu replied, "since you do not like it; as for myself, I have never been submitted to that kind of annoyance."

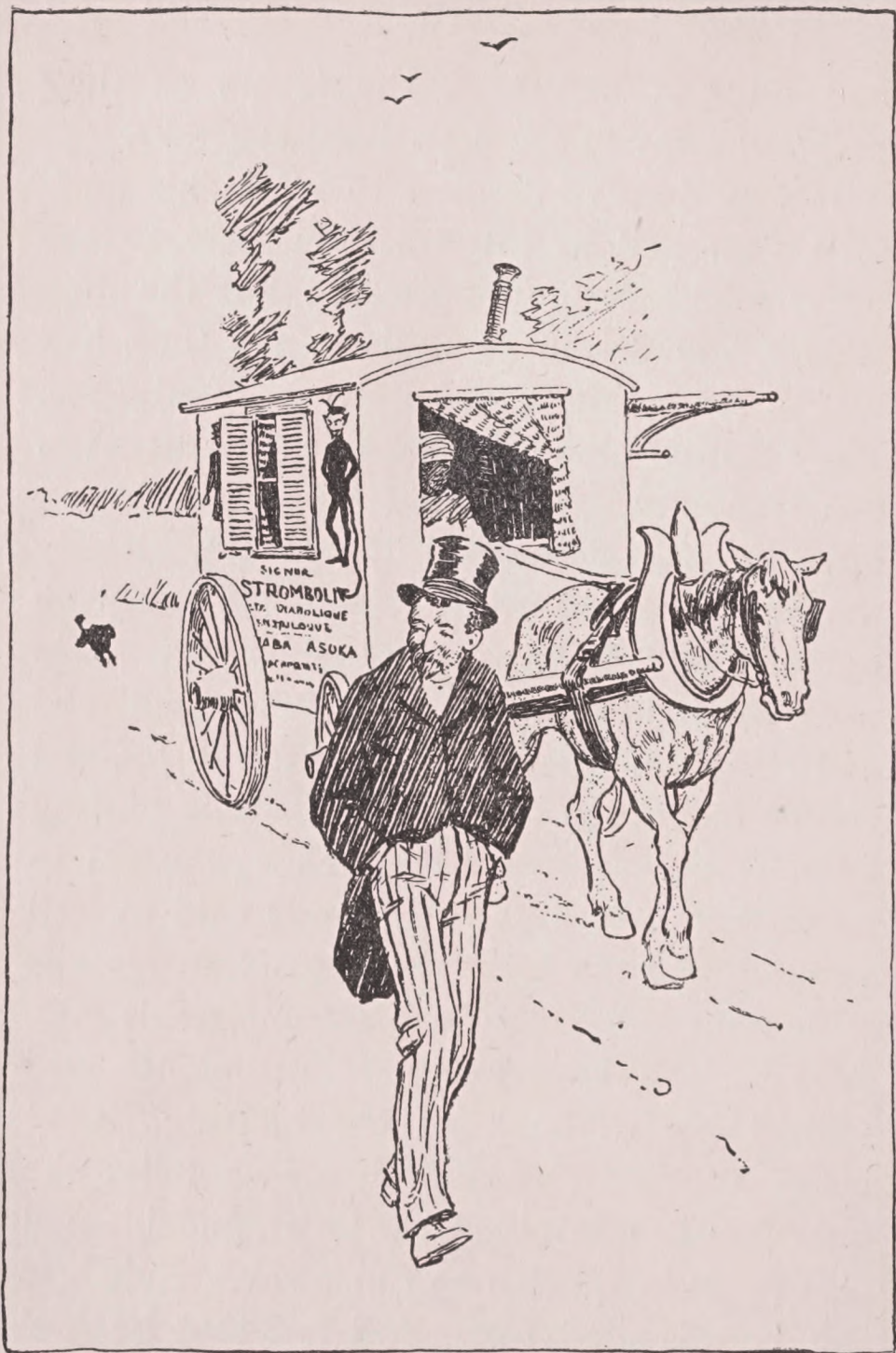
They talked a little further, Popotte becoming still more interested in her new friend and in his fascinating Bohemian life. That night, as we have said, as she lay under her master's bed she heard his deep bark of good-bye and rushed to the balcony. "Farewell, dear Popotte," Zulu had exclaimed. "I shall never forget you. You have given me my only glimpse of a life higher, — a nature more exalted than my own. Farewell, beautiful one, — farewell for ever —"

"No, not farewell," Popotte had barked in reply. "Wait for me; I am coming to you," and she had scampered down the staircase as fast as her four little pink feet could carry her. "Take me with you, dear Zulu," she had sobbed. "I cannot endure this life any longer. I shall die if you leave me."

And Zulu had licked away her tears and had assured her of his eternal devotion, and together they had slunk under the great gate,

and no one had seen the lovers as they pattered away in the moonlight together.

It was Zulu's intention to rejoin his master's van, and to introduce Popotte to the other members of the troupe; but the dog-trainer had driven so rapidly, and they had lost so much time, that he was far in advance. They trotted along, following the scent without difficulty, and would have caught up after he had encamped if Popotte, already tired from her theatrical efforts, had not given out and lain down from pure fatigue. Zulu made several excursions in the neighbourhood and returned, reporting a brook near by, and to this succeeded in inducing Popotte to drag herself; but she was too much exhausted to go farther that night. She was cold as well as tired, and the hard, damp ground was not a pleasant substitute for her comfortable mat. Already she lamented her imprudence and wished herself back at the château. Like many another victim of her own folly, she querulously upbraided her lover, and blamed him for inducing her to run away. Zulu was too large-souled to remind her that he had not begged her to elope with him, but had merely yielded to her importunity to be taken. He did his best to cheer and comfort



SIGNOR STROMBOLI AND HIS VAN

his forlorn little bride, and with the first ray of morning light foraged the thicket so successfully that he brought her a fat field-mouse for breakfast. But my lady turned up her nose at this barbarous, uncooked fare, and poor Zulu was at his wits' end. He tried to induce her to resume the journey; but Popotte was stiff, and discovering that she had a thorn in her foot set up a dismal little howl. "I wish I had n't come, boo hoo, boo hoo."

Zulu curvetted wildly back to the road, and looked up and down for succour. In the distance a van such as his master used was lumbering on toward St.-Germain, a man walking slowly beside it. Zulu dashed wildly after it, at first thinking that it might be the dog-trainer's establishment. But as no familiar doggish odours were wafted back to his quick scent, he perceived that this was the outfit of some other mountebank making its way to the fête. He paused for a moment; then, with a feeling that there must be a sort of free masonry among people of the same profession, trotted up to the man, sniffing his hands and wagging his tail as confidently as though he were giving grip and countersign. But the man was a surly creature, not given to making friends either with the brute creation or

with his own kind, and he roughly ordered the dog away. Zulu retired with a crest-fallen air. In that brief interview he had scented sandwiches in the man's coat-tail pocket, and he was seized with a great longing to possess them. Perhaps they might tempt the fastidious appetite of his beloved Popotte. He followed the man stealthily, creeping by degrees nearer and nearer. The end of a handkerchief hung out in a tempting way and Zulu seized it with his teeth, and with a sudden twitch the coveted sandwich rolled at his feet. Snatching it hastily, he made off *au grand galop*; but the man had felt the tug at his coat-skirts, and turning recognised the theft and ran after the robber.

Zulu made straight for Popotte and laid the sandwich before her, and when the man came crashing through the underbrush, Popotte was licking her chops, having finished the cold chicken which had formed the lining of the sandwich, and Zulu, instead of fleeing or cowering like a conscience-convicted thief, faced the man boldly as he lifted his stick to strike the little *gourmande*. The man, overcome by a new idea, let his stick fall harmlessly. It was not admiration for Zulu's

unselfish devotion and bravery. He possessed none of these qualities himself, and therefore could not appreciate them in others; but he was struck by the dog's cleverness in performing a theft. "You are a mighty sharp pickpocket," he said aloud, "and with a little training I could teach you to do it more gently, so that you would not be detected. You are a genius worth teaching, and you may come along with me." He accordingly patted Zulu and called him coaxingly, but the dog was not to be tempted from the side of Popotte. "I see," said the man, "in order to secure you I must burden myself, for the present, with this useless piece of dog-flesh. Ah, well; I can give it to Mademoiselle Tourbillon, the serpent-charmer; it will make a good dinner for her great boa-constrictor."

With this benevolent intention he lifted Popotte and carried her toward his van, Zulu capering at his side in high glee. A waggon laden with camp-equipage had halted a little farther on, and its driver, an undersized East Indian, was peering curiously around to see what had detained his master. The sides of both the waggon and the van were decorated with startling representations of the devil appearing in the midst of lurid flames at

the call of a magician whose face was recognisable as a rude portrait of the owner of the van. A legend above and beneath this picture announced the fact that "Signor Stromboli's Escarpolette Diabolique and world-renowned Prestidigitateur, Ventriloquist, and Wonder-worker—in company with Mohammed Ali Baba Asoka, the Magician of the Orient—would give séances which would thrill the stoutest and most incredulous heart with supernatural horror, and confound the clearest understanding."

Mohammed grinned as the prestidigitateur appeared with the dogs. "For new trick?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Signor Stromboli, tying Popotte inside the wagon, "the best trick yet, after I have it perfected. You can follow," he said to Zulu; then, suddenly realising that the appearance of the dog's master might lead to embarrassing complications, he lifted Zulu also to the interior, and, mounting to the driver's seat of the van, both it and the wagon jolted more rapidly in the direction of St.-Germain. He had a special reason for haste. The early comers had the selection of places, and he wished to arrive before the dompteur (or lion-tamer), who otherwise would certainly

place his encampment next to that of Mademoiselle Tourbillon, the serpent-charmer.

Signor Stromboli had often met these two celebrities at different local fairs; indeed, it was seldom that their booths were not pitched side by side, for he hated the dompteur as much as he pretended to love the fair enchantress of reptiles. The latter was a very pretty young woman, who travelled with her crippled brother, and made a good living for them both by her eccentric and foolhardy performances. The prestidigitateur watched the people flock into her tent and deposit their gross sous with the lame boy who kept the door, and he calculated that her earnings must easily be twice his own. As he was a bachelor, it had occurred to him that a combination of talent might be effected, and he had constituted himself Mademoiselle's devoted attendant. Mademoiselle accepted his friendly offices with nonchalance, allowing him and his servant Asoka to assist her brother in putting up and taking down the tent, in harnessing and in unharnessing the horses. She neither encouraged nor discouraged him, but gave him no opportunity for a declaration of his passion. She treated the dompteur, who was a widower, in a very

different way. She would accept no kindness from him, though she was all goodness to his motherless little daughters. Signor Stromboli regarded the dompteur as his rival, but was pleased with the way in which Mademoiselle treated him, and argued her preference for himself from the difference. On this occasion, before setting up his own little theatre, he called upon Mademoiselle, regretting that he had not arrived in time to pitch her tent, and presented her with Popotte.

"She is very fat," he remarked; "she will make a *bonne bouche* for your great boa-constrictor Coco."

The serpent-charmer felt of Popotte indifferently. "She is almost too fat," she said; "I fear Coco might choke upon her. However, that is easily remedied; I will starve her for a few days. She is too hairy, too. She will certainly tickle his throat as she goes down."

"You can have her shaved," suggested Signor Stromboli.

"Yes, but she would not look so pretty in the final act. I will oil her hair instead. You see this fluff of hair makes her look much larger than she is, and will make the feat seem all the more wonderful. Yes,

my friend, I am really very grateful to you, for with a good deal of starving and a little oiling she will do very well."

The travelling-vans of the serpent-charmer and the ventriloquist were encamped side by side behind their exhibition tents, and though Zulu and Popotte could not see each other, the walls were so thin that by barking loudly they could keep up a conversation.

"Zulu! Zulu!" barked Popotte, shrilly; "where are you? I am afraid."

"I am here," Zulu replied encouragingly. "What are you afraid of?"

"She has tied me in such a horrible, ill-smelling little room. There are cages all around with fearful serpents in them. They are mostly asleep, but there is one which is coiling slowly around a naked tree in the middle of its cage. There are lamps burning in each cage, and the air is thick and noisome. Ow! wow! the snake is looking at me. If he should get out, I know he would eat me. Oh, Zulu! whatever shall I do?"

"Look sharp for a chance to run away."

"How can I? Even if she should leave the door open I am tied with a stout cord."

"Nibble it through!"

"I can't; it tastes badly."

"Well, be patient; I will get to you by and by. Nothing can keep true lovers apart. Besides, they won't keep us tied up like this always. Something is sure to happen."

"That is just what I am afraid of, for the something may not be nice. Zulu, she has brought in a saucer of milk which she has placed in the cage where there are most serpents, but she has not given me any supper. There are some rabbits in a box in the corner; they are afraid too. She gave them a cabbage leaf, but they are too frightened to eat."

"Cheer up, Popotte. My new master has just come in. He has put some meat in his pocket and he has left the door ajar. He is untying me. Now, as soon as his back is turned, I will steal that meat and carry it to you."

Hardly sooner said than done. Signor Stromboli had begun to give Zulu his lessons in picking pockets, and his apt pupil seized upon the idea and the meat, but, much to the teacher's discomfiture, bolted with it through the door. Zulu did not go far, however, and Signor Stromboli, who followed, found him dashing frantically around the serpent-charmer's van, trying to effect an entrance. The

prestidigitateur seized Zulu by his shaggy pelt and dragged him back to his own van. "This time you shall not get away," he said, as he bolted the door; and taking away the meat, which Zulu had not swallowed, he repeated the performance.

Again the dog snatched it from his pocket, but, finding that with all his scratching and pushing, he could not open the door, instead of philosophically swallowing the meat himself, he crouched by the door, guarding it, and waiting for an opportunity to rush out. Signor Stromboli, having attempted unsuccessfully to get the meat away from him, tried putting a fresh piece in his pocket. Zulu, like the dog in the fable, who was tempted by the reflection in the water, was sorely puzzled as to what it was wisest to do, but, being blessed with more judgment than the dog who pointed the moral, he reflected that a piece of meat under his paw was better than one in the bush of speculation, and he remained motionless.

"Imbecile!" growled Signor Stromboli. "Prodigy of stupidity, will you never be taught? Eat, then, your meat, and seek another morsel. *Cherche*, I tell you;" and he waggled his coat-tail temptingly.

For answer Zulu thumped the floor amiably with his stump of a tail, then sprang to his feet with the meat between his teeth, and lunged against the door, whining to be let out. At the same time Popotte, whose expectation had been awakened, wailed impatiently for supper.

“Will you do nothing, unless it is for your miserable little companion?” asked Signor Stromboli. “Well, since it is so, we will humour you for the moment. There, go take her the meat, and come again for some more.” He opened the door, and, accompanying Zulu to Mademoiselle Tourbillon’s van, explained to her that he was teaching his dog a trick for which he needed the co-operation of the poodle which he had given her. “Leave your door open, so that he can bring her meat,” he said; “it is the only way that I can tempt him to work.”

“But I do not wish my dog fed,” said Mademoiselle; “she is too fat now for Coco to swallow; she must be reduced.”

“All very good,” replied the prestidigitateur; “I did not ask that your dog should eat, only that mine should be permitted to enter. You can muzzle your dog, and I fancy mine will never know the difference.”

Zulu dropped the meat before Popotte, and watched her eat with great satisfaction; but as soon as his cruel master dragged him away, Mademoiselle Tourbillon took the meat from Popotte, and tied her jaws together so tightly that the poor little creature could neither eat nor bark; but Zulu, who knew nothing of this, frisked gaily back after Signor Stromboli and robbed him as cleverly as he could wish. But, on laying his offering before his little bride, he at once discovered that something was wrong. Vainly he tried to undo the knots of the cord, and, finding that his own efforts were powerless, he barked loudly for assistance. In vain Mademoiselle threatened him with a broom and tried to drive him from the van. In vain Signor Stromboli called and coaxed. Zulu had to be dragged from Popotte's side, and the lessons were ended for that night, for he obstinately refused to "do anything." He made himself a nuisance to all neighbours by barking and howling dismally all night, the more persistently because Popotte did not reply to him; and if Nagy Pal had not been far away at the dog market, he would have recognised the baying of his lost actor.

The next morning Signor Stromboli at-

tempted to resume his lessons. Zulu was obdurate; after one tour of exploration he would do nothing. "There is no help for it," said the prestidigitateur to Mademoiselle. "I must ask you to unmuzzle your dog, at least for this morning, while the lessons are going on. You can snatch away the food as soon as my dog returns and give it to me; in that way yours will not get enough to fatten her."

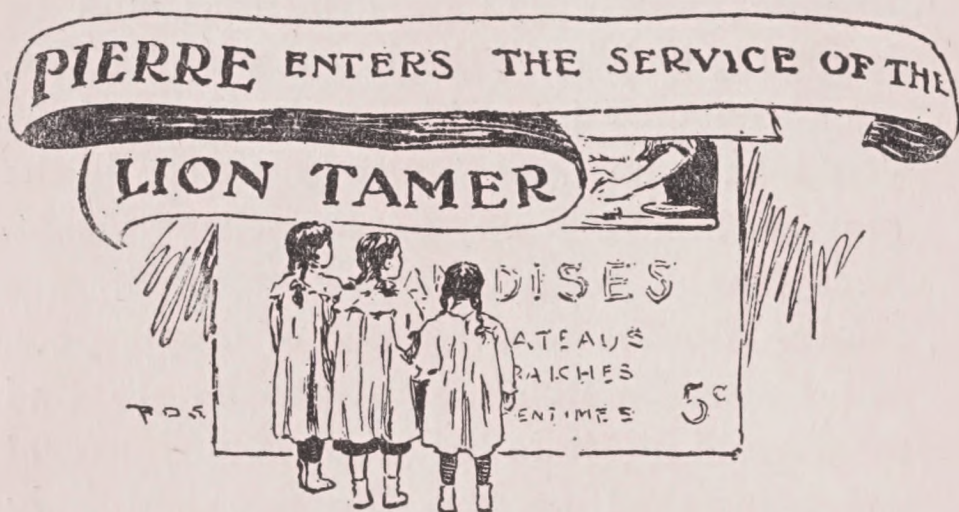
All the morning Zulu worked faithfully and gleefully, and Popotte was able, by his repeated gifts, to nibble enough to support life. Signor Stromboli did not always put meat in his pocket. He wished to accustom Zulu to stealing other objects. He therefore smeared an old pocket-book with gravy, and the dog carried it to Popotte under the mistaken idea that it was a dainty.

Under the pretence that so much coming and going might annoy Mademoiselle, Signor Stromboli borrowed Popotte, tied her in his van, and carried on the lessons in his exhibition tent. He trained Zulu to more adroitness in snatching the pocket-book, not allowing him to take it when he did it blunderingly or awkwardly. The dog accomplished his thefts with such delicacy of touch

that his teacher was half minded to try him that afternoon at his opening performance; but he reflected that a premature trial and possible *fiasco* would be disastrous, and he decided to wait until the last day of the fête, when the crowd would be denser, and he would have an opportunity to escape in the general breaking up of the encampment. Accordingly, while Signor Stromboli was causing flowers to grow out of empty pots, and beating watches into powder to find them again intact in the pockets of innocent and astonished persons, Popotte and Zulu enjoyed a brief interval of repose and of comfort in one another's society, though close prisoners in the van.



Chapter 4



PIERRE had wandered about disconsolately, seeking for employment, and late in the evening he paused in front of the cake booth, watching the woman make and serve waffles. Three little girls came up as he stood there, and the good woman served them without demanding any pay. Emboldened by this generosity, and thinking that possibly, now that the custom of the day was over, the woman was giving away what would otherwise be wasted, Pierre asked if he too might have a waffle.

"Par exemple!" exclaimed the maker of *friandises*. "Was there ever such presump-

tion? Because I choose to entertain the motherless children of my old friend and neighbour, the dompteur, am I therefore obliged to give to every chance tramp and beggar? Get out with you, and learn to earn your living honestly, like the rest of us!"

"I ask no better," Pierre replied sadly. "I would accept any employment, no matter how menial or dangerous."

"If that is so, you are the boy for me, for I need an assistant until the close of the fête," said a sharp voice at his elbow. It was a voice that startled one like the report of a pistol or the crack of a whip, — the voice of one accustomed to command, and to punish unmercifully if disobeyed. Pierre turned quickly and saw a lithe, thin man, with a piercing glance which seemed to see through him to the very marrow of his bones, and was certainly a discernor of the thoughts of his heart. It was the dompteur, who had come for his little girls; but the way in which they nestled close to him and clung to each hand showed that he could be loved as well as feared, and Pierre replied unhesitatingly, "I am ready, Monsieur; give your orders."

"Then first eat some of my good neighbour's waffles, for which I will pay, — for my

dinner was over hours ago, — and then I will show you where you are to sleep. Your work will not begin until to-morrow morning, but you must be up betimes. I wish you to clean out the cages of my beasts and feed them, and make all ready for the day's performance. Come, I will show you what you are to do, so that you may go to work before I get up."

Having devoured his waffles, Pierre followed his new master into his amphitheatre and was introduced to the menagerie. A row of great cages — communicating with one another on the side by sliding doors, which could be managed by a person in front by pulling different chains — faced the empty seats. The central cage was much larger than the others, and was really the stage upon, or rather in which, the performances were given. It had a door at the rear through which the dompteur entered. The cages to the left of this were empty; those to the right were each of them occupied by a snarling lion or tiger.

"Pull the chain whose handle is marked No. 7!" commanded the dompteur. Pierre did so, and the door between the first cage on the right and the performing cage slid slowly upward.

“Fasten the handle to the hook beneath it. Now take that crowbar and beat on the bars of the cage, and the lion will pass on into the performing cage. Next pull the handles 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and you will give the lion opportunity to pass through to the last compartment. Lower the gate. You have now got him safely fastened in the last cage at the extreme left, and by raising the other doors successively you can make the beasts pass along, leaving all of the cages on the right empty, so that you can go in and clean them. Be very careful in your management of the doors. We barely missed a serious accident at Fontainebleau through the stupidity of my former assistant.”

Pierre manipulated the chains and drove the animals from one cage to another to the dompteur's satisfaction. He then extinguished the lights and was shown a bed in a van at the rear. The next morning he was up early and proceeded to put into practice his master's instructions. He moved the beasts carefully, brought water and scrubbed the cages as they had not been cleaned for months, fed the animals as he had been shown, dusted the seats, and looked about vainly for something else to do. There was plenty of water



PIERRE MAKES THE TIGER'S TOILET.

left, and it struck him that one old lion looked remarkably mangy and dirty, and would be improved by a little grooming. He accordingly entered the cage with a pail of water and a large sponge, and proceeded to administer a bath and to comb his mane with Popotte's toilet comb which he had brought with him. The lion did not altogether like the application of the water, but he was old and toothless, so, though he roared angrily and struck at Pierre with his paw, he did him no injury. Encouraged by his success, Pierre passed on into the cage of the Bengal tiger. The water was nearly gone, but Pierre rubbed the animal down with the moist sponge. It had just completed its breakfast, and was composing itself for a nap. Pierre's touch was gentle and caressing, and the great beast purred and stretched itself, and turned of its own accord to allow its other side to be rubbed. While Pierre was in the midst of his barber-like occupation, the dompteur entered the amphitheatre and looked on with horror. Pierre was combing the animal's throat and looking into its great sleepy, lambent eyes, and the dompteur dared not avert Pierre's gaze, which he felt was fascinating the tiger. Commanding his voice so that there was in it

only the least perceptible tremor, he said, "Do not take your eyes off the tiger's for a single instant, on peril of your life."

Pierre felt the intensity in the voice, and, alarmed, stopped his rubbing. The tiger sat up and looked at him attentively, and the dompteur continued: "Back instantly out of the cage — quick!" Pierre obeyed, keeping his gaze fixed on the tiger's eyes. He had hardly passed through the gateway when the dompteur, whose hand was on the chain, dropped the grille, and not an instant too soon, for the tiger had crouched at Pierre's first backward step, and now sprang against the descending bars.

Pierre turned very white, and became suddenly faint with the appreciation of his danger; but the dompteur shook him angrily, and his sharp, scornful voice recalled him to his senses: "Fool, idiot, I suppose you think you are a hero! You thought you were doing a smart thing, did n't you? and that all one needed to be a lion-tamer was impudence. Well, you don't feel so fine now. It does n't take any courage, only ignorance and foolhardiness to play with wild beasts for the *first* time. You will have to give an encore of that pretty performance with a full knowledge

that you are taking your life in your hands, before I will give you any credit for bravery. You've had a good lesson, and I see there's no need of cautioning you. You'll not try to steal my trade again."

"I beg your pardon, sir," Pierre cried. "I did not know I was doing anything you would not like, and I thank you for getting me out. I know now that you saved my life. I will never meddle with your beasts again. I don't see how you can do it. I would not be a dompteur for anything in the world."

The lion-tamer smiled grimly. "It is not a pleasant life that such performers as Mademoiselle Tourbillon and I lead. You owe your escape partly to the fact that the tiger was not hungry and did not immediately awake to the fact that you would make a good dessert to her breakfast. We keep our animals over-fed, and they are lazy. Neither of us would venture to tamper with our creatures when they are hungry, which reminds me that coffee is ready; wash yourself and come in to breakfast."

Coffee was served by the eldest of the three little girls, Maximilienne. The other two, Adrienne and Augustine (the father explained

that he had named them for Roman emperors), were, in decreasing ratio, exact counterparts of their sister. They were all dark, and wore their black locks tightly braided in two pigtails. They watched Pierre with their piercing, bead-like eyes, the only feature in which they strikingly resembled their father. It seemed to Pierre that he had never been so scrutinised in his life. The result appeared to be satisfactory, for when the dompteur left, remarking that Pierre might do what he chose for an hour, Maximilienne volunteered the information, "We like you."

"I am glad of that," Pierre replied. "Can I do anything to help you?"

"Yes," replied Maximilienne; "we are going to take our lesson of Monsieur Sauteur, the acrobat, and you can come along and watch, and take care of Augustine, and take her home if she is silly and cries." Maximilienne and Adrienne retired to the interior of their van, and came out again dressed in similar costumes to that which Minka had worn when Pierre had seen her going through her exercise in the park; and when they reached the acrobat's tent, they found Minka already there taking a lesson. She was swing-

ing on a flying trapeze in a perilous position ; but she noticed Pierre's entrance and scowled at him fiercely. When Maximilienne was called forward, and it was Minka's turn to rest, she approached Pierre and asked him brusquely, "What have you come here for?"

Pierre hesitated, from his dislike of being impolite and the impossibility for him to be untruthful. "I am hunting for Popotte," he said at length.

"And why are you hunting for her here? You need not answer. You think that we have stolen her! It is an indignity for which I will never forgive you. The idea that my father would steal such a miserable little weasel as your dog! I might charge you, with much more reason, with stealing our Zulu. Listen: I do *not* believe you stole him, for you have not sense enough to appreciate his value; but I believe your father murdered him. No, you need not flush up and clench your fists. Strike me, if you think it is a fine thing for a boy to strike a girl. I am not afraid of you, though you are the son of a murderer. Our poor Zulu, while strolling innocently in your park, was probably caught and killed in one of your vile wolf-traps."

"It is possible," Pierre replied, "but it is not my father's fault. I told you that there were traps in the forest; you should not have allowed your dog to course there for our rabbits. If you took Popotte to make up for your loss, I beg you will let me have her, and I will pay you whatever your dog was worth."

"I tell you again that my father does not steal."

"He stole our rabbits."

"No, that was Zulu; he knew no better than to run them down and bring them to us."

"But you knew better than to eat them. You might have whipped Zulu and taught him better morals."

Minka flushed deeply and did not reply. The shaft had gone home, and Pierre was sorry for her. He wanted to say something kindly; but he could think of nothing, and he was awkwardly silent. Adrienne came to the rescue. "You must not be angry with each other, you two; I am sure you could not have stolen each other's dogs. It is very funny, but I am sure you will find out that some bad person has taken them both, and has made all this trouble."

Minka tossed her head, and her eyes flashed;

she was still angry and humiliated. Adrienne placed her arm about her waist and drew her away to a little distance. "What is he doing here?" Minka asked. "Is he staying with you?" Adrienne told the story of Pierre's adventure with the tiger. She told it with animation, for in her eyes Pierre was quite a hero. They had made the circuit of the ring and were approaching again the spot where he sat with baby Augustine on his knee, trying to quiet her fears as she watched Maximilienne hanging by her heels from the trapeze.

"And so," concluded Adrienne, "I want you to like him, for we think he is very brave and handsome."

"For my part," Minka replied, quite loudly enough for Pierre to hear, "I find him enormously ugly and stupid."

"Was it stupid then to wash the tiger?"

"Certainly, and more stupid still in the tiger not to eat him. I would have done so in the tiger's place."

Pierre's eyes twinkled mischievously.

"Then that is a proof, Mademoiselle, that you find me to your taste."

Minka was furious. "You dare to make jokes about me!" she exclaimed. "I hate

you," and springing to the parallel bars she worked off her excitement in a series of remarkable evolutions, whirling about the bar until Pierre's own brain spun, and he could think of nothing but a revolving Saint Catharine's wheel. She was far more expert and daring than the dompteur's daughters, but they were not jealous. Evidently she could be affectionate when she wished, for they were very fond of her and clapped their small thin hands at the close of each feat. Pierre joined in the applause; strangely enough, he admired and liked the little spit-fire, in spite of her rudeness to him, more than either Maximilienne or Adrienne with all their kindness. He was sorry that he had angered her, and was determined to show that it was not intentional. Each morning while the fête lasted he accompanied the little namesakes of the Roman emperors to the saltimbanque's tent to see them take their lessons, or rather he watched Minka, who never failed to toss him some gibe, or make fun of him to the other girls. Her conduct proved that she was at least not indifferent; and if Pierre had but known that the lively interest which she manifested in teasing him was, in a girl of her temperament,

a sign that he exercised a stronger influence over her than she desired, he would not have been so unhappy under her derision.

After the children had rehearsed their lesson, Pierre always returned to the dompteur's menagerie, and was kept busy during the remainder of the day and evening. The fête was now in full blast, and the dompteur's exhibition was the favourite one. All day long the lions were made to work, until Pierre felt a real pity for them and an admiration not alone for the courage but also for the endurance of the trainer. A loaded gun stood in a corner of the exhibition cage, but it was said that he had never used it but once, and then with fatal effect. His wife was also a trainer of savage animals, but on one occasion, when performing before a large audience, the lion sprang upon her, and the pretty woman lay dead in all her tinselled ballet finery, killed not by the savage brute but by a shot which her husband had fired in her defence. This was the reason why the dompteur never used the gun, his only defence being a stout raw-hide whip. The gun stood there as a menace, which some of the more experienced animals understood. A mighty lion that had been wounded by the

hunters who captured him would be reduced to instant submission by merely pointing at it; but it was a fetich and nothing else, and it is doubtful whether the trainer would have deigned to save his own life with the instrument which had taken that of his wife. Pierre grew to admire the dompteur more as he knew him better; and if he had not been so much attached to the St. Angels he would have been content to remain with him indefinitely. He was beginning to lose hope of finding Popotte. For no reason which he could explain to himself, he had come to believe that Nagy Pal had not stolen her; and, as they were leaving the acrobat's tent on the last day but one of the fête, he said simply to Minka, "I want to tell you that I don't think any longer that your father took our dog, and I am sorry that I hurt your feelings."

Minka stared at him in astonishment. "What has brought you to that conclusion?" she asked. "Have you been spying about our *roulette* (van), and discovered that we have not been keeping her hidden away?"

"That would not have convinced me, for you might have sold her, or have given her to some one else to keep for you; but I have been watching you, and I am sure that you

are too good a girl to do such a thing, or to think it right; and you are so proud of your father that I am sure he has not done it."

Minka's eyes grew wider in their surprise.

"*Tiens*, but you are an amusing boy," she said.

"I do not say it to be amusing, but only because I am going back to the château after the fête is over, and I wanted you to know that I have given up hunting for Popotte here, because I have too much respect for you to suspect you or your father any longer."

"How stupid you are! You have not questioned my father; you have not seen our dogs perform here. Your people will think that you have not done your duty. You would better follow us to a few more fêtes, and watch us a little longer."

This was said without the slightest attempt at irony. To Pierre's great astonishment the girl seemed to wish him to remain in the troupe.

"Oh, you must not leave us," chimed in Maximilienne and Adrienne. "We all like you, and even Minka does not think that you are so ugly as she did at first. At least, she said the other day that you were like the

gargoyles they have on the châteaux, — they were so ugly that they were not common.”

Minka was confused. “No, no; I did not say that,” she contradicted. An hour before she would have liked nothing better than to have had Pierre think that she considered him ugly, but his generous admission that he was mistaken in his suspicions had disarmed her anger. Pierre imagined that she was vexed that he should think that he possessed any kind of distinction.

“Good-bye,” he said, as they reached the dompteur’s tent; “I may not see you to-morrow.”

“If you are really going, you must come now and see a rehearsal of the performance which my father will give to-morrow. I insist that you shall inspect our dogs, so that you can give your master some proof of your belief in our innocence.”

Arrived at the Variétés Amusantes, the joint theatre for the puppet show and trained dogs, Zizi, the daughter of the clown, who was also the proprietor of the puppets, admitted the children to a row of seats near the stage, and Pierre looked on while Nagy Pal drilled the new dog which he had purchased at the

Marché, in the old parts in which Zulu had excelled.

“How stupid he is!” said Maximilienne; “not a bit like Zulu.” The dompteur’s little girls had had free admission to many of the performances and were extremely critical. “Zulu was so intelligent,” continued Minka; “he was a true artist. He must have been stolen by some one who knew his genius, and who intends to exhibit him. Probably it is the same person who took your dog. I am sure that if you go from fête to fête with us we shall finish by discovering him.”

It was Pierre’s turn to be astonished. “I did not know that you thought your dog had been stolen. You said that you believed my father killed him.”

Minka smiled mischievously. Pierre thought she had never looked so pretty. He had admired her before, but he almost loved her as she said, “I did think so; but I believe now that your father is too kind a man to have done that, — that is, if he is at all like you. Come, now, and look through our van; you must be thorough in your search.”

Pierre followed her half dazed. There was no trace of Popotte anywhere, and he was

glad of it, for he felt that he would rather Popotte would not be found at all than to discover that Minka or her father had stolen her.

As he passed the prestidigitateur's tent with the dompteur's children he stopped to read the inscriptions.

"Come along," said Maximilienne, in her father's authoritative way. "Come along, or the devil may catch you."

Pierre gave another glance at the startling paintings which had been transferred from Signor Stromboli's van to the front of his tent and asked, "Is the devil his friend?"

"He says so," Maximilienne replied. "He says that the devil helps him do his tricks."

"It is not exactly so," interrupted Adrienne. "Come along faster, and I will tell you a secret;" and she pulled Pierre's head down to a level with her lips and whispered, "He is the devil himself."

As Pierre looked incredulous, and even smiling, she contracted her black brows and walked on silently with offended dignity.

"He is the only bad man among all the artists in the troupe," said Maximilienne. "All the others are *braves gens, honnêtes gens*."

"If that is so," said Pierre, "I do not believe there is any hope of finding Popotte here, and I do not see why Minka should expect to find Zulu."

"That is true," Maximilienne replied; "for even if any of the artists were bad enough to steal him, they could not exhibit him, for Zulu is so well known by all of us that he would be instantly recognised."

In truth, if Signor Stromboli had not been of so solitary a temperament, he would himself have recognised the dog as belonging to the troupe of one of his neighbours. But he never attended a representation of any of his *confrères*, excepting occasionally the séances of the serpent-charmer, and lived a selfish, unsocial life. Frankly returning his indifference, none of the other comedians, even in their moments of leisure, honoured his phenomena by their presence.

Adrienne alone, being of a prying disposition, had occasionally fitted her eye to a rent in the tent in order to see Asoka go through the basket trick. In this perilous performance Asoka, who was a little man and very supple, would allow himself to be tied into a ball with a net about him, and lifted into a large basket, which he apparently filled.

Here he would divest himself of the net and coil himself closely against the sides of the basket, so that Signor Stromboli could step into the middle and jump up and down, and even thrust a sword through the sides in an apparently reckless fashion. In reality, the spots at which the sword entered were carefully agreed upon beforehand, and Asoka would seize the blade and guide it, so that there was little danger. As the basket contracted slightly at the top, Signor Stromboli would close the exhibition by rolling it about the stage with the opening toward the audience, who were always positive that it was empty. When, after all this, Asoka sprang from the interior unharmed, it is no wonder that Adrienne was convinced that such wonders could only have been effected by the arch fiend himself.

Adrienne would have been horrified if she had known that her friend Minka believed firmly in the possibility of diabolic assistance, and was this very evening wearing a charm to evoke it. When the children left the Variétés Amusantes, Minka busied herself preparing her father's supper. After the meal the two took their violins, as was their wont, and sat by the camp-fire playing weird melodies. After a time Minka threw down her violin,

exclaiming, "I wish my grandmother were here!"

"Why do you wish that, daughter?" asked Nagy Pal.

"Because she was a gypsy of the gypsies, and would teach me something of Rommany lore and customs. I am a Rommany girl; but I am growing up as ignorant as a Gorgio (Christian). I cannot tell fortunes, or divine hidden water, or bring a wasting spell on man or beast; I know nothing of our history; I have lived so long away from our people that when I come to them again they will cast me out."

Nagy Pal looked at his daughter with pride. "You are a true daughter of the Rommany," he said, "and the spirit of Egypt is beginning to move within you. I will take you at the end of the summer back to our own people, and my mother, who is a queen of one of the clans, shall instruct you."

Minka did not seem satisfied. "That is a long time to wait. Will you not begin teaching me yourself?"

"What do you want to know? to tell fortunes, I suppose. and to make love philtres. That is old women's business; I cannot do that."

"But there are other things which you know, and which I want to know."

"The language of beasts? Yes, I can whisper to a horse and he will follow me, and I have learned to talk to my dogs and to understand them. It is an easier language than that of men, and it shows the superiority of dogs over men; for, if a gypsy dog of Spain or of the Moors meets a Christian dog of a far country in London, they will talk together, but a gypsy man of Spain cannot understand the language of the men of London or be understood by them. Zulu and I had many conversations together. If I ever find him again, I will teach you to talk together.

"I do not care to learn the language of dogs," Minka replied. "I would rather learn more human languages."

"What, then, do you wish?"

Minka looked about her and shivered, and then bent forward and whispered to her father.

"The evil eye!" he exclaimed. "Why should you wish to possess the power of casting the evil eye? It is a terrible thing to cause the death of a human being."

"Not death," replied the girl, "but a charm

to bind and to hold, to keep another in my own power, to hinder his going when he wills to do so, to cause others to fancy themselves ill when they are not."

"And a terrible power is that also, but one always desired by women, and possessed by many not of our race. The learned physicians of the Christians are beginning to take it into account and to study it. They call it hypnotism, but they have not the secret charm which unlocks the mystery; they are playing with fire; they had better leave it alone. And you, too, Minka, — you are too young; wait till you are a woman, and you will then feel the power coming of itself. The eye of every beautiful woman is an evil eye, powerful to bind and to hold the will of man."

But Minka fixed her piercing gaze on her father. "I have felt the power, but I do not know how to use it. Teach me now, or I shall go about using it ignorantly, and shall do much mischief, for I do not know how to take away will without taking away life."

Nagy Pal shook his head incredulously. "You could do neither," he said, "unless you knew the words of the charm."

“I remember them partly,” Minka replied. “I remember going to a farmer’s house with my grandmother. She stopped by the hogsty and said the words over a fat swine, then we went on our way; but when we came back the swine was dead of raving madness, and they had dragged his carcass down to the river, and thrown him in. We followed on the bank as it floated down toward our encampment, and when the farmer’s men were out of sight, my grandmother repeated another charm, and the swine swam merrily to the shore and trotted after us. I remember the first charm; it was —”

“Stop! stop!” cried Nagy Pal, in great alarm, “or you will bewitch me; even now I fear you have brought great trouble upon me. I will teach you the words which bind and hold, but you must never use them except in great necessity, and you must be careful to remember the counter-charm, or the same mischief will recoil upon yourself. If you say ——, your victim will be powerless to leave you. Your will will be his. He will imagine himself stricken by an evil disease, a wasting sickness, poisoned by the breath of serpents; but in reality it is only

his mind that is sick, and he will be your slave."

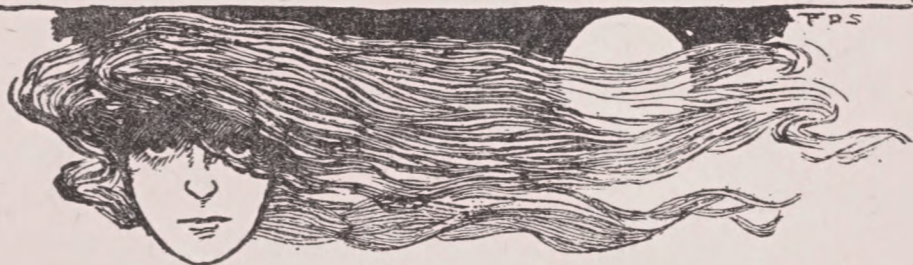
"And how can I remove the spell?"

"It can never be removed except by repeating the charm backward, when his will will be yours, and you will be his slave."



Chapter 5

THE EVIL EYE



AND so the fête of St.-Germain went merrily on, apparently all gaiety and innocent fun, but with undercurrents of evil for man and beast, — for Popotte, who had lived hitherto a life of luxury, and was now being starved by inches in preparation for a horrible death; and for Zulu, a dog of unselfish instincts, who was daily being educated, through his noblest feelings, to the profession of a thief.

He had learned his lessons so well that on the afternoon of the last day of the fête Signor Stromboli had ventured to allow him to put them in practice. Zulu was placed in the back part of the darkened auditorium, where he was not noticed by the spectators, who

entered blinded by the transition from sunshine to comparative darkness. The stage on which the prestidigitateur performed his tricks was lighted by a row of footlights, and as the magician began his continuous performance before the entry of the majority of his audience, who straggled in and out throughout the afternoon, the attention of those entering was immediately directed toward the stage. Asoka, who took the entrance money, slyly slipped slices of sausage into the pockets of two of the persons who passed him, which Zulu, whose senses had been sharpened from having had no luncheon, immediately scented and appropriated, and afterwards investigated every available pocket in the hope of finding more. As the pushing, scrambling crowd stumbled down the steps of the amphitheatre, they scarcely felt, or if they noticed did not recognise, his delicate touch. Zulu accordingly availed himself of one greasy pocket-book after another, creeping out with them under the seats and depositing them before Popotte, who was still tied in Signor Stromboli's van, as she was not yet needed for the grand serpent-swallowing act, which was to take place late in the evening.

For a long time Zulu's thefts were surprisingly successful. The persons robbed, not having occasion to use their purses until they had left the tent, did not discover their losses immediately, and did not all locate the theft as having taken place inside. A few returned and angrily proclaimed their grievances to Asoka, but he protested that the robbery must have been committed by some pick-pocket in the audience. He proved, by calling his neighbours to witness, that their troupe consisted only of Signor Stromboli and himself, and that the signor had not left the stage, nor had he quitted his post as doorkeeper, and the prestidigitateur reaped a large harvest in the course of the forenoon. Not only did he secure some twenty pocket-books, many of which were well filled, but a strange fatality brought into his grasp the famous St. Angel rubies.

Ever since Pierre had departed on his luckless quest, Ludovic had mourned for him almost as much as for Popotte. He visited the gamekeeper's cottage every day to learn if there were any news, and when Pierre's mother produced a letter from her son, saying that he was at St.-Germain, where he intended to remain until the close of the fête,

Ludovic entreated his parents to take him to the fête. On the last day the Marquis consented to do so, and with Ludovic by his side and a boy in buttons sitting with folded arms behind, drove over to St.-Germain in Ludovic's trap.

Just as he was leaving, the Marquise handed her husband the case containing the ruby necklace, and asked him, as he intended to return by way of Paris, to leave it at a jeweller's to have the broken pendant mended. The Marquis placed the casket in the breast pocket of his overcoat, and did not think of it again until his arrival at the jeweller's.

He left the trap with the groom at the inn at St.-Germain, and walked through the forest with Ludovic to the Fête des Loges. The boy had not been allowed to attend many fêtes, and he was delighted with the spirit of gaiety, — with the whirling merry-go-rounds and the noisy music; with the painted clown capering in front of the Variétés Amusantes, and the acrobat tumbling on his strip of carpet, the centre of a group of admirers. He wanted to see the puppets and to taste the waffles, to buy the toy trumpets and to ride in the merry-go-rounds. The Marquis himself felt inclined to give his little boy pleasure, and

when they reached the tent of the prestidigitateur, and Asoka in his Oriental dress announced from the little veranda that he was about to give the famous fakir basket trick, the Marquis, who had seen such a performance in India and considered it very interesting, proposed to Ludovic that they should witness it.

Inside the tent it was very warm and close, and the Marquis thoughtlessly took off his overcoat and laid it on the bench beside him. The basket trick was very well done, and the Marquis and Ludovic went out much pleased with the performance. They passed directly to the lion-tamer's menagerie and inquired for Pierre, who came out at once and was overjoyed to meet them.

"But I have not found Popotte," he said sadly to Ludovic; "and what is more, I do not think she can be anywhere at this fête. I am sure that the dog-trainer did not take her, and I do not know what to do or where to go."

"Give up the search, my dear fellow," said the Marquis, "and come back with us to the château. I will buy Ludovic another dog, which you can take care of."

"Yes, come, dear Pierre," said Ludovic,

“since there is no hope of finding Popotte; but I do not want another dog. I could never love it, and it would only remind me of my lost darling.”

They had walked back to the inn, and the groom had brought out the trap.

“Jump up behind,” said the Marquis, “and we will take you back; it will be a nice surprise for your mother, who has cried her eyes out for you.”

“I will come to-morrow,” said Pierre; “but I have promised the dompteur to stay with him until the end of the fête. He will need me all day and to-morrow in the breaking up. So if you will let me ride back to the menagerie, I will do my best to finish my engagement with credit, and will surely come to you to-morrow.”

As they drove briskly along the avenue the Marquis felt the coolness of the air, and realised for the first time that he had left his overcoat in the tent of the prestidigitateur. He drew rein before the door and demanded of Asoka in such a peremptory manner that Pierre should be allowed to go in and get it, that the East Indian was so frightened that he allowed Pierre to enter. Pierre found the overcoat exactly where the Marquis had de-

scribed, for it had not been observed by either Signor Stromboli or Asoka, though it had not escaped Zulu's sharp eyes and prying nose. The Marquis put it on immediately, without feeling in the pocket or thinking of the rubies, and with a cordial good-bye drove off in the direction of Paris.

Pierre turned to hasten back to his master, and found himself face to face with Minka. She wore an angry scowl, and he wondered that he had thought her pretty the day before when she had spoken so kindly to him.

"You are really going back to your people," she said. "I heard you say so just now."

"Yes, Minka, I am sorry to leave you; but —"

"But you like that scornful little aristocrat better; you cannot deny it."

"I like you so much, Minka, that I wish you would come with me. I heard the Marquise say that she would receive you whenever you chose to come."

"That is your will, but it is not mine. It is mine that you shall stay here and live with us, and we will see which is the stronger. Will you stay of your own accord, because you like me and — because I like you?" Her

voice and look were tender again, almost as they had been the day before.

"No, dear Minka, I must go; but I will never forget you."

"You shall *not* go. You *shall* stay against your will," Minka hissed; and she looked at him with such a horrible expression that Pierre covered his eyes and ran away, but not before he heard her utter some strange words in a language which he did not understand, — the spell which bound and held and wasted the body with imaginary sickness, the spell of the evil eye.

Pierre returned to his duties at the dompteur's, and Minka to the Variétés Amusantes. The girl was in a tumult of conflicting emotions. She waited with triumph and with apprehension the result of her incantation. She was so excited that she had forgotten to repeat the counter-charm, which would keep the spell from recoiling in disaster upon herself and family, and she did not even think of the omission until later in the afternoon, when a most serious misfortune happened to her father.

Signor Stromboli had continued to do a thriving business until the close of the day, when the complaints of those who had been

robbed grew more frequent, and the aggrieved persons put their heads together and called upon a gendarme for assistance. This agent of the law very sensibly remarked that if he should enter the room the thief, recognising his uniform, would probably cease operations, and advised them to find the pickpocket, when he would appear and arrest him.

Acting on this advice, a peasant, who had lost a roll of bank notes, put in effect the following stratagem. He rolled a newspaper into a similar wad, and, fastening it with a stout pin to the lining of his pocket, again sauntered into the tent. An almost immediate twitch at his pocket advertised him that the thief had fallen into the trap. Striking out with his right fist at his nearest neighbour and clutching at the skirt of his coat with his left hand, he caught, not a man's hand, as he had expected, but a dog's nose. The innocent person so rudely assaulted raised an outcry, and rained blows in return; but the peasant had presence of mind not to lose his grip on Zulu, at the same time shouting his apologies and explanations. The gendarme rushed in, seized another innocent person, who struggled violently, and the *mêlée* became general.

The prestidigitateur availed himself of the confusion to run to his van, rifle all the pocket-books, and secrete the money on his own person. Then, as Asoka burst in with the same intention, he bade him throw away the empty purses in some distant place, and himself returned to the exhibition tent with more lights, demanding, with the appearance of the utmost innocence, the cause of this disturbance. Order had already been partially restored, and the peasant was loudly exclaiming, "The thief, — it is this dog. I found his nose in my pocket."

Signor Stromboli laughed derisively. "What would the dog want with your money?" he asked. "Nevertheless, if you suspect him, search him."

"It is not the dog, but the dog's master, whom I shall search," said the gendarme.

"*Eh, bien!* Who brought the dog here? It is not my dog; I have never seen him before."

The officer of the law led Zulu out into the open air. A crowd had collected, and Adrienne had wriggled her thin body with the agility of an eel under baskets and between legs to the very front.

"Whose dog is this?" asked the gen-

darme. "Does any one remember having seen him before?"

"Why, that is Zulu," piped Adrienne; "he belongs to the dog-trainer of the Variétés Amusantes."

Asoka had returned from hiding the pocket-books in the wood, and stood panting on the outskirts of the crowd; but he took the hint at once, and was off like a shot. He wound the pocket-books in his turban, and making straight through the wood to the dog-trainer's van, threw them in at his little window just as the gendarme, followed by the crowd, presented himself at the door of the theatre where Zizi's father in his clown's dress was announcing the wonderful performance of trained dogs to take place that evening. On perceiving the approach of the procession, headed by the gendarme and Zulu, his only thought was that the lost dog had been found, and that they were bringing him back in triumph to restore him to his owner. He positively identified the animal as belonging to Nagy Pal, and brought forward his partner, not in the least suspecting that he was handing him over to arrest. It was in vain that Nagy Pal protested his innocence; the gendarme instituted a search, and the rifled

pocket-books were regarded as proof positive of his complicity. The dog-trainer was led away to prison, his van was placed under the seal of the law and driven into the courtyard of the prison, and not only the culprit Zulu, but also the entire troupe of performing dogs were detained as prisoners. Zizi's father, the proprietor of the Variétés Amusantes, was also arrested, but was released the next morning at the preliminary examination. Only Zizi and Minka, the latter begging in vain to be imprisoned with her father, were allowed to return that night to the Variétés Amusantes.

The affair created immense excitement and not a little indignation in the encampment. The "artistes" were jealous of their reputation for honesty, and all asserted their belief in the innocence of their *confrère*, — all but the prestidigitateur, who confided to Mademoiselle Tourbillon, as he handed her Popotte, that he considered that the dog-trainer had been justly punished for a plot to work his ruin, as he had purchased the dogs from Nagy Pal, not knowing that one of them had been trained as a thief to carry back stolen articles to his master.

The serpent-charmer half-closed her eyes, and regarded the prestidigitateur through the

slits with a peculiar expression. "You will doubtless remain to the trial, and testify against him," she said.

"No," replied Signor Stromboli, "it is well to keep well out of such complications."

Mademoiselle Tourbillon continued to look at him in her sleepily amused way. "Such trials do not interest you? Well, this one interests me immensely, and, *mon ami*, I think we shall *both* attend it."

Signor Stromboli was a trifle taken aback. What did she mean? Possibly she had seen enough of his manœuvring with the two dogs to guess that he, and not the dog-trainer, had reaped the benefit of Zulu's thefts. Was she trying to settle this question from his reply to this invitation to attend the trial; or, knowing his unwillingness to expose himself to danger, was she gauging her influence over him by his answer? It was characteristic of the man that, judging others by himself, he did not believe she would think any the worse of him if she knew that he was a successful rogue. In his opinion, too, every one had his price. Mademoiselle knew enough to be dangerous as an enemy; she must therefore be bought over at once, and become his accomplice.

He looked at the serpent-charmer with what he fancied was a fascinating smile, but which seemed to her a most disgusting leer, and assured her that he had long been her devoted lover.

“Accept me, beloved one,” he concluded, “and this shall be my betrothal present.” He placed in her hand the morocco case, and Mademoiselle Tourbillon opened it and saw the magnificent St. Angel rubies. Signor Stromboli lifted the necklace and attempted to fasten it about her throat, but the girl repulsed him violently. She loved trinkets, and she realised that these superb stones were no cheap imitation gems; but she was honest at heart; neither her love nor her complicity was purchasable, and the dislike which she had always felt for the prestidigitateur deepened into a deadly loathing.

“Take back your present,” she said; “the receiver is as bad as the thief. I have no mind to make myself liable to arrest by keeping them for you.”

Signor Stromboli was not in the least insulted, but answered gaily that she could now understand why he had too much confidence in his own good judgment and in Mademoiselle's good taste to believe that they would

either of them attend the trial. The serpent-charmer's eyes opened wide and flashed fire. "My good taste shall not be questioned in future," she said,—"at least in the matter of the choice of my friends," and she banged the door of her van smartly in his face.

The prestidigitateur chuckled to himself, "She is magnificent when she is angry, and she will come around in good time. I made a good round sum out of that dog's operations. A pity that he was discovered and taken from me,—I could so easily play the same game at all the different fêtes and fairs that we visit."

Every one hurried through their dinners that evening to be ready for the night's performances; for the Fête des Loges was always best attended on the closing night, and all of the mountebanks had full houses with the exception of Signor Stromboli and the Variétés Amusantes. The story of the lost pocket-books had travelled fast, and lost nothing in its travelling. In spite of the fact that the prestidigitateur had not been arrested, people dared not venture into what they called the "pickpockets' den."

The dompteur profited by his companions' misfortunes, and his own arena was full to

overflowing. He closed, however, at the usual hour, for his beasts were weary and impatient, and the lioness was in especially bad humour. She had refused to leap through the blazing hoops in the act with fireworks, and had slunk off to her cage growling ominously. The dompteur had thought best not to coerce her, or to excite any of the beasts further, and had refused the demand of the crowd about his door who desired an extra performance. The crowd, disappointed in this direction, poured into the tent of the serpent-charmer.

The dompteur himself, on seeing that all was right for the night, took his daughters to see Mademoiselle Tourbillon give her famous tableau of the Medusa's Head. Adrienne had told Pierre of the strange reappearance of Zulu, and of the trouble which had fallen upon the gypsies, and as soon as his work was over he hurried to the Variétés Amusantes. The little theatre was closed for the first time in many a long series of last nights at fêtes. There was no clown joyously beating his drum and reciting stale jokes from the little platform; no smiling Zizi at the receipt of custom; no yelping of dogs behind the scenes. He walked around to the rear of

the exhibition tent. Nagy Pal's *roulette* was gone, but there was a sound of subdued weeping in Zizi's, and he knocked timidly. Minka came to the door. Her eyes were very red and her hair was disordered. "What! is it you?" she asked. "Has nothing happened to you? Are you quite well?"

"Quite well, dear Minka, and I have come to see if there is anything I can do for you."

"Only to go away and never let me see you again. The evil eye has lighted upon my father, and you have escaped. But the night is not over yet. Beware! Beware of the evil eye."

"Don't mind her," said Zizi; "she is quite wild with grief. Try to calm yourself, Minka, and sleep. Our fathers may be liberated tomorrow. Those who have done no wrong need have no fear of justice."

Pierre went away reluctantly, seeing that his presence only served to excite Minka. As he strolled idly along, he heard a quick step behind him, and a wiry little claw seized his arm. It was Adrienne. Her eyes were wild with excitement, and she was so eager that she could scarcely speak.

"Go, quick!" she gasped; "here is my ticket! I did not give it up as I went in.

There is a white poodle there; perhaps it is the one you are seeking. Go! make haste! They are about to feed her to the great serpent. You may already be too late."

Pierre darted forward and rushed into the tent. A white poodle stood on the platform. Its hair had been carefully dressed for the sacrifice, and the forelock was tied with a tiny blue ribbon. Mademoiselle Tourbillon had just placed it before the great boa, and it now raised itself on its haunches in the beseeching attitude which Popotte always took at the command, "Fais le beau."

It was fascinated by the serpent, which was watching it, and slowly erecting itself and distending its terrible jaws, preparatory to darting upon the little creature. The poodle quivered in every limb, and there were smothered exclamations in the audience: "Mais non, c'est une chienne de race. C'est une infamie de la massacrer comme ça." (But, no; it is a dog of fine pedigree. It is an infamy to cause its massacre in this way.)

A great indignation swelled in Pierre's heart. For Popotte's sake no dog should be murdered in this cold-blooded way; and he pushed his way to the front, whistling to attract the attention of the dog. With a con-

vulsive effort it turned its eyes from the serpent, and Pierre saw that it was really Popotte. He knew his danger now, but that recognition nerved him to a tremendous leap. He cleared three benches, and, stooping, snatched Popotte from the very jaws of the boa-constrictor. The reptile missed its aim, but its terrible hooked teeth fastened themselves upon Pierre's arm, and, with a mighty contortion of its huge body, it flung itself around Pierre, pinioning his arms to his sides in the first coil, and straining itself into knots as it attempted another twist of the deadly lasso. But Mademoiselle Tourbillon, with admirable bravery and presence of mind, caught the creature's neck with both hands. The reptile tightened itself to its utmost. Pierre felt the blood rush from his heart to his brain and the breath leave his lungs. As he sank to the floor he heard the serpent-charmer's despairing cry. The boa had writhed itself from her grasp, and one wrist fell dislocated at her side. He was suffocating under the constriction of that loathsome embrace. Its fetid breath was in his face, and — was that malignant thing the evil eye? Then he knew no more. He did not see the dompteur, the only man in that audience who

was not paralysed with fear, striding his prostrate body, with one heel firmly planted on the boa's neck and both strong arms grappling and straining at the coil which was crushing out Pierre's life. The dompteur was a man of enormous strength as well as bravery, and the serpent's grasp relaxed in his strong grip. He wrenched its body from the boy, but even then its hooked, inturned teeth remained fixed in Pierre's sleeve. Fortunately they had not penetrated his arm. Mademoiselle tore away the cloth, and the dompteur thrust the boa into its iron cage with no gentle hand. Then he came back and lifted Pierre tenderly, feeling him with the firm but velvet touch of an experienced surgeon, and frowning so angrily when he discovered that a rib was broken that many in the audience felt that the boy must be his son. It was not till Mademoiselle had brought water, and Pierre was restored to consciousness, that the dompteur turned gallantly and examined her own wounded wrist. "It is nothing," she said, though even his delicate touch thrilled her with pain.

They felt themselves before an audience. The instinct of the actor triumphed over every other feeling, and they bowed with



THE LION-TAMER RESCUES PIERRE

such grace and aplomb as the dompteur announced smilingly, "Grand finale, Tableau de Laocoon et le Python," that the electrified audience, not certain but that, after all, it was only a little play acted for their benefit, burst into thunderous applause as the crippled brother pulled the curtain.

A physician, who happened to be one of the spectators, made his way behind the scenes, and treated both injuries. "Fortunately," he said, "they are not serious this time; but I would advise you, Mademoiselle, to have that serpent killed, or to otherwise dispose of it. I have a friend, Professor Saumur, a naturalist, who is a collector for the Jardin d'Acclimatation. He would doubtless buy him from you, or, if you preferred, could stuff him for you, for he is an expert taxidermist. Mounted nicely, he would be almost as much of a show as if he were alive; and surely one experience of this kind is enough."

Mademoiselle rejected the proposition with scorn, which was hardly polite of her, since the physician had made no charge for his services.

Pierre looked about him in a dazed way. It hurt him to take a deep breath, and he

could scarcely think. But when the dompteur said, "Come, my boy, you have proved yourself a hero through and through, but don't peril your life again for so slight a cause," Pierre cried out: "*Mais ça*, it was not a slight thing; and where is she? Where is my Popotte?"

No one knew. She had vanished as completely as if the serpent had indeed swallowed her. They searched for her under the cages and benches in the auditorium, and up and down the avenue and among the vans, but Popotte was nowhere to be found.



Chapter 6

AT ROBINSON CRUSOE'S TOWN



BREAKING CAMP -

AT an early hour the next morning the little community broke up its encampment. Pierre was awakened by the clatter of the planks as they were loaded upon the waggons, and drank the coffee which Adrienne brought him in the open air, for the little tent which had served as dining-room was already struck and packed. Already many vans were on the march. The dompteur had the largest number of assistants of any of the showmen, but he had such a train of carts and cages,

and so many horses to harness, that he was the very last to get his caravan in order and sweep in imposing procession down the high-road that led away toward the West of France, for he was going next to a Breton Pardon, the Pilgrimage festival of Saint Anne d'Auray.

Early as it was when Pierre finished his coffee, he noticed that the prestidigitateur had already gone. With the help of Asoka he had taken down his tent during the night, and had stolen away before his confrères were awake. Mademoiselle Tourbillon, with her hand in a sling, was flying about trying to secure assistance for her crippled brother. She had come to count upon the friendly offices of Signor Stromboli, and she was indignant that he should have deserted her in this way.

Pierre was feverish and giddy. He had passed a bad night, and the dompteur, seeing his condition, told him to do nothing; but Pierre could not see the serpent-charmer's predicament without offering his services, and he began work, but the pain in his side soon forced him to stop. Mademoiselle found an able-bodied peasant who took his place, and in the intervals of directing the labour she chatted kindly with Pierre.

"I have been thinking of your dog," she said, "and I believe that Signor Stromboli stole her in the confusion of last evening. If so, we shall find her again, for he is going to the same fêtes to which we are bound."

Pierre looked up gratefully and hopefully. "But why should the prestidigitateur want Popotte so much? Will he exhibit her?"

"No; but it was for her that the black poodle picked the pockets of his audience. I saw through his trick. The black poodle would not work without your Popotte. Signor Stromboli did not know this when he gave the dog to me, but he was obliged to borrow her, and it was for that, I am sure, that he stole her last night."

"But the black poodle is arrested."

"True, but he will be liberated after the trial. They will not punish him with imprisonment, and without doubt Signor Stromboli is waiting his time to get hold of him again. We, too, must wait our time. I will make him relinquish Popotte, for he really gave her to me."

"But how could you give her to your serpent? I cannot understand that of you, Mademoiselle, — you who seem so kind and good."

"No? But God made the serpent, and therefore it has a right to live. It is not constituted to eat grass like an ox. Are you not also wicked when you eat mutton, the flesh of the little lambs, or the flesh of birds? And you have not the excuse of my Coco, for you could be a vegetarian if you pleased."

Pierre was silenced for the moment, but he broke out again. "But Popotte was my pet, and so intelligent."

"And Coco is my pet, and he is also intelligent. When that doctor advised me to kill him, I was very angry. I shall do nothing of the kind, in spite of his naughtiness. I shall keep him well fed, and not snatch his food from his mouth, and then he will not be naughty. But I will not feed him with your pet, and we will find her yet, never fear. I am going now to the Mairie, to attend the preliminary examination of Nagy Pal, and perhaps you would better go too, and stay with me until after the final trial, for I believe that Signor Stromboli has not gone far, but is lurking somewhere in the neighbourhood waiting for a chance to get Zulu."

"I will stay with you," said Pierre, gratefully, "but do not make me travel in the same van with your snakes."

“Never fear, — that is my apartment; you shall sleep in the tent with my brother, and ride with him on our *wagon d'équipage*.”

Pierre bid good-bye to the dompteur and his family with sincere regret. “I shall hope to see you all again at the autumnal fêtes near Paris,” he said. “I shall certainly attend them if I have not found Popotte in the mean time.”

The little girls were much grieved with parting from him, and drove away making conspicuous use of Maximiliene's handkerchief, which always did duty for the three.

Mademoiselle attended the preliminary examination of Nagy Pal, but Pierre's head ached so that he did not go inside the courtroom, but waited for her outside, and while waiting managed to write a note to his mother. “I must send it right away,” he explained to Mademoiselle's brother, who saw that the effort was too much for him. “She expects me home to-day, and so does my young master, but they will both think that I do right not to give up the search now that I have fresh traces of Popotte.”

Pierre's non-appearance at the château did indeed cause graver anxiety and submit him to darker suspicion than he realised.

The Marquis and Ludovic had called upon a friend in Paris, and did not stop at the jeweller's until late in the afternoon, when he immediately reported the loss of the necklace to the police.

In response to the interrogation of the agent, he stated that he had entered but one tent, that of the prestidigitateur, and that he was positive that the theft must have occurred while the overcoat was out of his possession. The agent assured him that he would go immediately to St.-Germain and would report to the Marquis in the morning. He had great hopes of being able to secure both the thief and his booty.

The Marquis was very grave and silent as he drove homeward.

"Do you feel so badly because you think it will grieve Mamma very much to lose her beautiful rubies?" Ludovic asked.

"Yes, my son; but there is another circumstance which troubles me still more."

"I am glad you told the police that Pierre went into the tent and brought you your coat, for I think Pierre can help them find the thief."

"I have no doubt that he could if he would, for I am sorry to say that the agent

thinks that Pierre may have been the thief or, at any rate, his accomplice."

"Oh, no!" Ludovic cried, "Pierre could never have done such a thing. He is coming to us to-morrow, and if the agent has not seen him I am sure he will go right to him and help him."

"If Pierre really does come home to-morrow," said the Marquis, "it will do much toward clearing him from suspicion so far as I am concerned. If he is guilty it is very unlikely that he will come."

"He will certainly come," Ludovic asserted confidently; "he promised, and Pierre always keeps his promises."

But when the day passed and Pierre did not arrive, and the next day brought an almost illegible scrawl stating incoherently that it was quite indefinite when he should return or where he should go, as he had new hopes of finding Popotte, the Marquis shook his head sadly, and the Marchioness remembered that she had surprised Pierre on the day before he left the château with the necklace in his hands. Ludovic burst into a torrent of indignant tears. He did not believe in the guilt of his friend, but he could not make his parents believe in his innocence, and he

was very wretched. Fortunately, nothing of this was reported to Pierre's mother, and the good woman was happily unconscious that her son was suspected of either stealing the jewels or assisting the gypsies to do so. The detective sent by the Parisian police force had arrived in St.-Germain that night, and had learned that Nagy Pal had already been arrested for thefts committed during the day in the tent of the prestidigitateur. On learning the circumstances, he was convinced that the rubies were taken by the same person who had organised the entire series of thefts. He consulted with the St.-Germain police and, adopting their view that Nagy Pal was the criminal, made no effort to secure Pierre. The St. Angel rubies were mentioned in the charges made against him at the preliminary examination, and it could be seen that this particular accusation produced great emotion on the part of the prisoner. "What!" he exclaimed, "has some one stolen the necklace that was once the property of Maria Theresa, — rubies of marvellous colour and size set in iron-work of lace-like delicacy?"

Nagy Pal was told that it was indeed such a necklace, but that he incriminated himself by showing such familiarity with it.

“Know it?” Nagy Pal replied scornfully. “Every gypsy knows that necklace, but not a gypsy would steal it, for a gypsy never takes back a gift, and these rubies were the free gifts of gypsy hearts to their sovereign.”

All this seemed the merest nonsense to the prosecution, and Nagy Pal was remanded to prison to await his trial several weeks later. Mademoiselle Tourbillon recognised the description of the necklace as applying exactly to the one which Signor Stromboli had offered her, and she determined that nothing should hinder her from testifying against him at the trial of the dog-trainer. Zizi's father was released, and Nagy Pal commended Minka to the care of his old partner. The parting between father and daughter seemed singularly stoical, but Mademoiselle Tourbillon could see that Minka was quivering with suppressed emotion which she was too proud to exhibit before curious spectators. As they left the Mairie together, Minka suddenly dried her eyes, and looked at Pierre sitting with the cripple on the *wagon d'équipage*.

“I thought you were going back to your friends at the château,” she said. “Why are you here? Are you ill? How white you are!”

"Pierre had a very narrow escape last night," Mademoiselle Tourbillon said; and she related the adventure of the evening.

Minka's expression changed to one of deep pity, almost, one might have thought, of self-reproach.

"And so," said Pierre, kindly, "you have your will, Minka, after all, for I am going to stay with Mademoiselle, and we shall meet at a good many more fêtes."

"And are you sick?" Minka asked anxiously.

"No," replied Mademoiselle Tourbillon. "The doctor said there was nothing serious the matter with him."

Pierre tried bravely to smile, but a look of pain settled on his white face.

"You feel ill," Minka said sympathetically.

"Yes; I am too weak to walk to the château, even if I had not decided, now that I have seen Popotte, to stay and try to find her. Come and see me sometimes, and we can be sorry for each other."

"Where are you going?" Minka asked of Mademoiselle. "To Robinson? And the Variétés are going to the Fêtes of St. Cloud. We shall not be very far apart. Yes, I shall

come to see you ; ” and she waved Pierre a kind good-bye as she climbed to Zizi's side on the roulette, and took the reins, which the older girl gave her unhesitatingly, for Minka was an accomplished whip and could have driven a four-in-hand creditably. It was part of her ambition to be a circus-rider as well as a gymnast, and some day to own a white horse of her own. To-day she drove off with more than her usual *élan*; but she drew rein at a little distance and waited until Mademoiselle Tourbillon's *wagon d'équipage* overtook her.

“ Don't look so grumpy,” she called to Pierre; “ if the doctor said nothing was the matter with you, of course nothing *is* the matter. The trouble is all in your imagination; besides, you might be a great deal worse off, you know, and I am *very* glad you are going to stay with the company; so cheer up, and the next time don't let Coco hug you so hard ; ” and with a parting flick of her whip, which nearly lifted Pierre's *béret* from his head, she drove gaily away.

“ *Tiens*,” said the cripple, who sat beside Pierre; “ there is a girl who has no heart. She has just left her father in prison, and she sits as straight and cracks jokes as gaily as if

she were riding in a triumphal chariot with captives tied to her wheels."

"Why do we not go to St. Cloud with her? Is there a fête also at Robinson?" Pierre asked.

"It is always *jour de fête* at Robinson," the cripple replied. "It is a very curious village, in a very lovely landscape, where artists go for sketching and the *petite bourgeoisie* to amuse themselves. It is a village of *guinguettes* (restaurants), cheap shows, and booths with foolish articles for sale, — great trumpets and Jack-in-the-boxes, and all sorts of things *pour faire rire*. But what makes it different from an ordinary fair is that it is built on the side of a mountain from which there is a superb view, and in the tops of an old grove of horse-chestnuts and oaks."

"You mean in the shade of the grove, do you not?" Pierre asked.

"No," replied the cripple; "the peculiarity of this village is that it is built in the trees. Long ago some enterprising restaurateur built a summer-house on one of the largest trees, with a staircase leading to it, and called it the House of Robinson Crusoe. It had a great vogue, and then, as he had no patent on his idea, other keepers of restaurants invaded the

region, and the trees are as full of houses now as a pine grove is of crows' nests."

The drive which Pierre took that day was one of the most beautiful in the vicinity of Paris. St.-Germain itself was very lovely, and the view of Paris from the great terrace one of the finest which can be obtained; but the route which the snake-charmer and her company followed was varied, and from many a hill-top they had panoramas rivaling that from Le Notre's terrace. They clattered through the streets of Versailles, and Pierre had a glimpse of the park of Le Petit Trianon, with its pretty toy village, in which Marie Antoinette played at peasant life; but he had no idea of the great historical drama acted there, and he stared stupidly at the walls of the palace, with no conception of the miles of paintings which it contained. They skirted the forest of Mendon, and about noon drove into Robinson. Pierre found the village even more curious than he had anticipated. A painted statue of Robinson Crusoe greeted them on their entrance, and Pierre crossed himself and doffed his hat as they passed, thinking that this must be some saint. The houses in the trees were most ingeniously constructed. Some of them were three

stories in height. The kitchens were at the foot, and the food was pulled up in a basket.

Mademoiselle Tourbillon did not rent a tree, but paid for permission to camp near one of the most popular. Pierre made himself as useful as he could, and fed and cared for the serpents; even going into Coco's cage to get the lamp, and so far overcoming his repugnance that he could handle the smaller snakes. He did not care for them as pets, as Mademoiselle did; but all animals interested him, and Ludovic had read him portions from a book by Jules Verne which had fired his mind with visions of adventure in tropical forests. He recovered rapidly, and as there were many horses and donkeys for rent for the use of tourists who wished to ascend the hill for the sake of the view, Mademoiselle asked him if he would like to be a donkey-driver while at Robinson; and Pierre was greatly delighted when a pretty mouse-coloured donkey was put in his charge. It was so tiny that it could carry only children; but it had such a pretty red velvet saddle, and so many scarlet tassels and merry jingling bells, and was withal such a picturesque little creature, that children were invariably attracted by it. Pierre found that walking, or

even running, gave his broken rib no uneasiness. It had been set by means of plasters, and he had been cautioned only against using his left arm. The proprietor of the donkey rented it at rather a large sum; but for this he agreed to feed it and give it stabling, and all that Pierre could gain beyond this charge would be his own. He found that he could take a sufficient number of trips during the day to make a large profit; the only question was that of obtaining patronage. He took his stand at first in front of the serpent-charmer's tent; but he soon found that this was too far up the mountain, and that every one had engaged a donkey before reaching this point. He next stationed himself among a horde of other donkey-drivers at the exit of the railroad station; but his shrewd sense soon told him that this was an equally undesirable location. He had too much competition here; the other drivers were more blatant and hustling, the great donkeys jostled his little one aside, and he had no chance whatever. But Pierre was not discouraged. He noticed that many parties pushed their way through the importunate throng, declining even to look at the animals, scornfully confident in their own pedestrian powers. When about one third

of the way up the mountain, these independent individuals usually began to pant and gasp, and regret that they had not bargained with the drivers. Pierre followed what seemed to him a promising family of several children, keeping at a discreet distance until the younger children began to cry to be carried, and the fat mother sat down disconsolately beside the road. Then he whipped up his donkey and passed them, whistling cheerfully and nonchalantly. The father, who stood wiping the perspiration from his brow, the picture of discomfort and perplexity, called to him and offered him a larger sum than Pierre would have charged at the railroad station, to carry the children by turns the remaining distance. Pierre noticed the spot where the bargain was struck, named it the "Station of Lucky Weariness," and thereafter took his stand at this point.

While Pierre and the serpent-charmer remained at Robinson, Mademoiselle Tourbillion's profits were moderate, but they would have been still more meagre had not Pierre acted as a drummer in praising the wonderful exploits of the serpent charmer to each of his patrons.

As several days passed and Minka did not

appear, Pierre decided to take a morning off and jaunt over to St. Cloud on his donkey and look her up. He passed by the foot of the artificial cascade where, when the *grandes eaux* play, the waters come dancing down the great terraces between the brilliant parterres of the royal garden. The Prussians destroyed the palace, but the exquisite hillside park, with its expanses of velvet greensward, its glistening statues and crystal fountains, is as carefully kept as in the days of Napoleon, and is open to the poorest tramp, a precious possession of the people. Pierre had thought that no garden could be lovelier or more stately than that of the St. Angels, and he paused at the foot of the water staircase riveted by admiration and surprise. He was awakened from his reverie by the cry "La bruyère, la bruyère, ce n'est pas chère," and a fagot of blossoming heather was thrust into his face. He had recognised the voice before the flowers struck him. It was Minka, who stood before him smiling, with her arms full of purple blossoms. He was off the donkey in an instant, and had helped her to the saddle.

"No, not that way," she said, looking around anxiously, as he turned the animal's

head in the direction of the cluster of booths farther down the avenue, where the music of the merry-go-rounds proclaimed the presence of the fête. "Let us go up the hill, — not through the gardens, but up this path through the forest, where we will not be observed."

"But why not observed?" Pierre asked.

"Because I am tired of being spied upon," Minka replied. "I have been watched and followed ever since we came to St. Cloud. There is a photographer who is always poking his head under his black cloth and watching me through his camera whenever I set foot outside of the Variétés Amusantes. I do not like it, and I told him so once. I said, '*Tiens*, my friend; you have photographed me now five times, and I am not so beautiful or so famous that I can understand why you wish to do so. I desire that you look in another direction.' 'A cat may look on a king,' he replied, 'and amiability is as attractive as beauty. It is your sweet expression, Mademoiselle, which fascinates me.' Whereat I made a worse face at him and ran away. I can only escape him by climbing to the top of the hill to gather heather. It is too steep for him to follow me, loaded down by his kit, through the brushwood; but when I come out

on the open, where the heather grows, I can see him down on the Place, watching me through a little telescope. We will keep in the shelter of the forest and he will not see us."

"He is very impertinent," said Pierre; "but I will protect you. I wish you would go past his shop with me, and if he stares at you I will send him about his business."

"He has no shop. He stays at the Pavillon Bleu, which is very high-priced, and he does not take photographs for money, but apparently only for his own amusement. He is very inquisitive, and he comes and talks to Zizi, who is a great gossip, and asks questions about all the artists. He asked about you, and where you were now; but fortunately Zizi did not know, and I held my tongue, for I do not think he means you any good. I saw him at a little curiosity shop the other day, where they sell articles which have been put in pawn, and I heard him say to the merchant as he left him at the door, 'If the necklace appears, let me know immediately, for it is demanded by the law.' Now, what could he mean by that?"

"Perhaps he is the friend of a thief who is afraid that his accomplice will pawn some stolen jewels."

"No, I do not think he is a criminal, for then he would slink about and avoid being seen. On the contrary, he seems to me to be on the track of some one. If it were only the prestidigitateur! He asked about him, too, but none of us know where he has gone. Have you seen him at Robinson? Have you found your dog?"

Pierre shook his head sadly. "Why have you not been over to see us?" he asked. "You promised that you would come."

"I have told you, because this photographer follows me and I was afraid he would find you."

"But I have done nothing wrong. I am not afraid of him."

"My father had done nothing wrong and he is in prison."

"But he will be cleared at the trial. Mademoiselle Tourbillon has important testimony to render, and we are going there together."

"That is very good of her. I will come over to Robinson and go with you."

"Will not Zizi and her father go?"

"No. Something which this man has said has made them afraid, and they have decided to leave St. Cloud quietly and go to Chantilly. The town is always *en fête* during the

aces. How I would like to see the horses! If my father is liberated, perhaps we will all go." She looked at Pierre with a questioning, half-dissatisfied expression. "You are feeling better. Is it not so? You are well."

"Yes," said Pierre, "I am quite strong again."

"And you wish to leave us, I presume."

"Not until I find Popotte."

"*Toujours* Popotte. You care more for that miserable little cur than you do for me."

"It is not so much the dog as it is that it is my duty to find her, and I care for that."

"Duty? Duty? What is that?"

"Why, don't you know, it is what we must do, whether we like it or not, because we know that we could never hold up our heads and look straight in the eyes of those who love us if we did not."

"Then it is my duty to go to my father's trial instead of running away to Chantilly to see the races."

"Yes," Pierre replied joyfully; "I knew you would know what *your* duty was and would do it too. I will ask Mademoiselle to let you stay with her, and I will come on Saturday and fetch you with this donkey. Good-

bye, now, for I must get back to Robinson before it is dark."

Mademoiselle was willing. "*Par exemple,*" she said, with a shrug of her shoulders, "am I an asylum for *enfants trouvés*. However, she is welcome to share my bed and my crust. It will not be for long."

Pierre brought Minka to Robinson several days before they left, and the girl made herself very useful, insisting upon taking upon herself all the household duties, and playing the violin during Mademoiselle's performances.

On the day before the trial at St.-Germain a photographer arrived at Robinson and went directly to the serpent-charmer's exhibition. Mademoiselle was giving her tableau of the Medusa's Head. In this spectacle she had made use of a table with mirrors beneath it, so that her head seemed to be severed from her body and to rest on the table. A crimson scarf thrown across the throat and chest contrasted with the ghastliness of the upturned face, and disguised the upper part of the body. Mademoiselle really sat on a chair behind the table, but the mirrors hid the chair, and gave the spectator the impression that there was nothing beneath or behind the

table. What rendered the sight peculiarly horrible was the fact that the serpent-charmer had wound among her disordered locks a fillet to which were bound a dozen small serpents. Their poison sacs had been carefully removed, but they writhed and erected themselves, and struck at one another and against Mademoiselle's temples in their efforts to free themselves from the fillet, in such a malignant fashion that the sight rarely failed to sicken the stoutest heart.

The photographer took several views during the séance. It was no wonder that he was fascinated by the subject, for the tableau had been suggested to Mademoiselle, as we have said, by Leonardo da Vinci's Medusa, and there was a smile worthy of Da Vinci on her apparently dead lips.

The photographer complimented her at the close of the performance, and begged for another special sitting, which the serpent-charmer good-naturedly accorded, although Minka, who was watching from behind the scenes, made vigorous signs of disapproval.

"I will send you some of the photographs when they are finished," he promised, "and you can sell them to your admirers. To what address shall I mail them?"

"We leave here late to-night to go to St.-Germain," said Mademoiselle, "and may remain there several days."

"Indeed! And may I ask what takes you to St.-Germain, since the fête has been over for some time?"

"We are much interested in the trial of a friend of ours, Nagy Pal, the dog-trainer, and we are going to attend it."

It appeared that the photographer had read of the circumstances in the papers and was also interested. He asked a great many questions, all of which Mademoiselle answered very freely. Pierre came in while they were talking together, and the man looked at him keenly and asked, "Are you not Pierre, the son of the Marquis de St. Angel's game-keeper?"

"Yes, Monsieur," Pierre replied, smiling; "but how did you know me? I do not remember ever seeing you before."

"No; but I have heard the Marquis speak of you. By the way, his little son was much disappointed that you did not return to the château when you promised to do so."

"I wrote that I hoped to find Popotte."

"And have you found her?"

"No; and we shall not until we find Signor Stromboli."

"That is the prestidigitateur, whom Made-moiselle here thinks is responsible for all the thefts the last day of the fête of St.-Germain."

"I do not *think*, I know that he is," Made-moiselle replied.

"Well, be sure to be at the trial to-morrow; your testimony may clear the dog-trainer. And are you going too, Pierre?"

"Oh, yes, sir; for I am sure Nagy Pal is innocent! If you can do anything for him, please do. I would do anything in my power to help him."

"You may be able to do more than you think, my boy; do not fail to be there. It is very possible that the Marquis de St. Angel may attend it in person, as he is of course very eager to recover the ruby necklace and to punish the thief." The photographer watched Pierre's face very closely as he said this, but the boy's face showed only unfeigned surprise.

"Has the necklace of the Marquise been stolen?" he asked. "When did that happen?"

"The last day of the fête; but the Marquis is very certain who took it, and will bring the offender to justice."

"Oh! I hope so," Pierre exclaimed. "It must have been that wicked prestidigitateur."

"It was he," Mademoiselle asserted confidently. "I saw it in his hands."

"Come, this is certainly to the point. Be at the Mairie without fail at ten o'clock."

"We will not fail, sir."

The photographer walked away rapidly in the direction of the station. "That boy is perfectly innocent," he said to himself. "I stake my reputation as a detective on that fact. The probability is that Nagy Pal is innocent also, and that this Signor Stromboli, whom they all accuse, is the real rogue; but how can we trap him?"

Minka ran forward as soon as the photographer had gone. "Why did you talk to him?" she asked; "that is the man who watched me at St. Cloud."

"I thought so," said Pierre.

"But he is a detective."

"Then it is our business to help him detect the real criminal," said Mademoiselle.

"I hate the police," Minka replied; "they are stupid, and always arrest the wrong people. Now, how did he find us, I wonder?"

It had not been a difficult task. The pre-

tended photographer had missed Minka soon after she left St. Cloud, and had asked Zizi what had become of her. Zizi, who was deadly afraid of the man and thought that his absence would give herself and father a good opportunity to break camp and steal away to Chantilly, did not scruple to give him correct information and to put him on the track of the serpent-charmer and Pierre.

As soon as the day's business was over Mademoiselle Tourbillon began to prepare for moving. One of the servants of the restaurant was helping transfer the cages and boxes to the van, and the children were not needed for the moment. Minka had run up the narrow winding staircase that encircled the trunk of the tree, and stood in the top pavilion, enjoying the beautiful sunset. Pierre stood at the foot of the tree. They had been chatting gleefully when Minka suddenly uttered a shriek of terror.

Coco, who had escaped from his cage, had climbed into the tree and was dangling from one of the branches directly over the little staircase. The child was nearly frantic with fright, and dared not pass under the serpent to reach the staircase.

"Don't be afraid;" Pierre cried; "I will call Mademoiselle Tourbillon and she will coax Coco away."

"No, no, do not go," Minka screamed, "I will jump;" and suiting the action to the word, she sprang straight into Pierre's arms. The distance was over twenty feet, and, accomplished acrobat as she was, this was a little thing for Minka; but Pierre felt a sudden pang of anguish, and knew that the rib, which had slowly knit, had snapped again. He uttered no cry; but led Minka to Mademoiselle Tourbillon, and assisted in securing Coco, and in the breaking up of their encampment, mounting to his seat beside the cripple on the jolting *wagon d'équipage* for their night ride to St.-Germain, for this was necessary in order to reach the town in time for the trial on the morrow.

Mademoiselle Tourbillon had much upon her mind, and did not notice Pierre's pale face. He knew there was no physician in Robinson, and was determined not to trouble her with his new accident until after the trial, as he felt sure that she would insist on having medical advice and that this would delay their journey. He suffered much during the night, and as they reached the edge of the forest of



MINKA MAKES A
PERILOUS LEAP



St.-Germain, each breath which he drew was agony. At last a smothered groan was forced from his compressed lips, and the cripple saw by the early light that he was suffering intensely. He halted at once, and called his sister, and Pierre acknowledged his condition. "I cannot go any farther," he moaned; "you must leave me here to die."

The tent was set up in a dingle, and Mademoiselle drove to the nearest village and brought back a physician, who treated Pierre, but insisted that he must lie perfectly quiet for several days or he would not answer for the consequences. Mademoiselle made him as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. Minka had gone quietly about, doing little things with an expression in her face which was almost maternal in its anxiety. Pierre's face was drawn with pain, but the anxious look in his eyes had nothing to do with himself.

"Hurry, dear Mademoiselle, you will be too late for the trial."

"Do not distress yourself," she replied with cheerful assurance; "trials are always slow, lingering affairs. They will have hardly begun, and I have no doubt they will adjourn several times before it is over."

But Mademoiselle did not feel the confidence which she assumed for Pierre's sake, and, hastily swallowing the coffee which Minka had prepared, she hurried her horse forward at its utmost speed. The van lurched from side to side of the road, and rattled into St.-Germain at such a frantic pace that the inhabitants hurried to the windows, the passers crossing the street sought safety in immediate flight, and she was twice commanded to stop by the gendarmerie. At the court-room an official demanded her business, and she hastily explained that she had come to give testimony in the trial of the dog-trainer; that she was a neighbour of the accused, having pitched her tent near his at many fêtes; that he had always borne the reputation of an honest man, and that his dogs were irreproachable; but that the prestidigitateur, in whose tent the robberies had occurred, was a charlatan and a cheat, and she could prove that he had first stolen Zulu and had then taught him to steal.

"This is quite interesting," said her hearer, "and it is a pity that you did not arrive sooner; for the trial is over, and your testimony might have made a difference in the

verdict. However, it is now too late. The judge has gone to dinner and the prisoner to prison. The prisoner and the dinner are alike doomed,—it is as impossible now to rescue the one as the other.”



Chapter 7

OF THE WICKED SCHEMES OF SIGNOR STROMBOLI

WE have lingered so long over the circumstances which happened to our human characters that it is quite time that we give some attention to the adventures which in the meantime befell the real hero and heroine of this story, — Zulu and Popotte. What had happened to the latter was indeed not very far from Mademoiselle Tourbillon's guess. When the little poodle felt herself freed from the fascination of the serpent, she was nearly frantic with terror, and the instant that Pierre had dropped her she had fled from the tent. Force of habit had led her to take refuge in the van of the prestidigitateur. He was closing his door preparatory to retiring when she dashed up the steps and crouched trembling

at his feet. Here was an unexpected bit of good fortune. He had regretted giving the dog to Mademoiselle, and it had returned to him. He hoped to find an opportunity, either by fair means or foul, to secure Zulu, and he had learned how necessary was Popotte's inspiration to the services of the black poodle. He therefore petted the little creature and tied her in his van. He did not immediately retire, but sat smoking and thinking. Finally he called to Asoka, "Find out where Nagy Pal's dogs have been taken, and especially our dog." He put out his light and lay down in his clothes, waiting Asoka's return. The East Indian reported that the dogs had been given into the care of the jailer, who had tied them in the outer court of the prison. He could see them through the great grille, or iron gate, which was locked for the night.

"And this grille," asked Signor Stromboli, "you are a good acrobat, could you climb over it?"

"Easily, but there is a watchman, a soldier in a sentry-box beside the gate."

"That is awkward. How about the bars of the grille? Are they so close together that Zulu could not creep through?"

“Yes; but he might worm himself under the gate were he not tied.”

“I see. The prospect is not encouraging, but I will try all the same;” and fastening the end of a very long cord to Popotte’s collar, he took her under his arm and walked toward the prison. It was a moonlit night, and the sentry could see him plainly as he approached. He had set down Popotte, and she was trotting by his side. He sauntered up to the sentry, and entered into conversation with him, at the same time giving Popotte the entire length of her cord. One of the dogs in the prison yard barked, and Popotte slipped under the grille and across the yard. Zulu recognised her, and almost burst his leash in the wild leap which he gave as he attempted to run to meet her.

“Wow, wow!” barked Zulu, “you sweet thing, to come and see me!”

“Wow, wow!” from Popotte; “how mean of you to go away from me!”

“I could not help it. I am in a prison; they have tied me up very short, and have not even given me straw to lie upon.”

“Then why do you stay? Come away at once with me.”

“I am tied, as you see, and cannot break

my leash ; ” and Zulu strained his cord to the utmost, but it remained firm. Popotte attempted to nibble it, but her delicate little teeth made no impression on the tough fibre ; at the same time a tug at her own cord dragged her remorselessly across the prison yard. Zulu bounded after her, but fell nearly strangled.

“ Wow, wow ! ” wailed Popotte, “ I will come again, Zulu ; now that I have found you, nothing shall separate me from you ; ” but even as she said this the prestidigitateur dragged her back under the iron gate and out into the street. He led her away slowly, stopping just around the corner when out of sight of the sentry, but not beyond Zulu’s hearing, to whip her cruelly, in the hope that her piteous cries might bring Zulu to her rescue. They did wring his faithful heart, and he replied with such loud and angry barks of defiance, vowing vengeance and calling for help, that all the other dogs of the troupe joined in the outcry. But he was too firmly secured to escape, and so carefully watched that, though the prestidigitateur tried many devices, he was unable to secure him. He remained, however, encamped in the neighbourhood, and, disguised as a peasant, at-

tended the trial of the dog-trainer. He stood near the door ready to slink out on the least appearance of danger to himself, and he watched the faces in the room with some apprehension. Mademoiselle Tourbillon's significant threat had filled him with uneasiness, and it was with great satisfaction that he discovered that she was not among the witnesses.

The evidence against the dog-trainer was chiefly circumstantial, consisting in the empty pocket-books which the gendarme deposed to having found in his van, and which were recognised and claimed by their owners, who also testified as to the amounts which they had contained.

The dog-trainer's protest that he could bring witnesses to prove that he had not left his own exhibition tent and van that day, did not aid his case, for the last man that had been robbed testified that he had caught Zulu's nose in his pocket, and it was correctly inferred that all the robberies had been effected in the same way. Nagy Pal protested that he had not seen Zulu for several days, that the dog while in his possession had always had a good character, that he had never taught him to steal or

known him to take anything but rabbits and scraps of food, and that it was impossible that he could have developed a taste for pocket-books of his own accord. Black poodles were much alike. The dog that was caught in this disgraceful act might resemble his Zulu sufficiently to deceive every one but himself, but one thing was certain: if the dog in question was a thief, it could not be his dog; if his dog, it could not be a thief.

The *juge de paix* upon this plea ordered that Zulu should be brought into court, and the jailer appeared leading him by a leash. The instant that he was released the faithful creature bounded toward the prisoner, exhibiting every doggish token of exuberant joy, and covering him with caresses. Even Nagy Pal, who would have preferred on this occasion not to be recognised, was touched by Zulu's affection, and patted his head kindly, admitting, "Yes, this is my dog, my lost Zulu, but he is no thief."

Alas for the dog-trainer! at that instant Zulu sniffed at the green bag of one of the lawyers. Its owner was as much of a gourmand as the Bishop of Champigny, who was said to mark the places in his breviary with slices of ham, and the lawyer's luncheon

was at the bottom of the bag. Zulu's head was inside it in a twinkling; but, finding that he could not extricate it, he returned to his master for help, shaking his muzzled head and whining beseechingly. A murmur ran through the audience which said that this was considered as proof positive that the dog had been trained to thieve, and to bring stolen objects to its master. The lawyer for the defence conversed in an excited aside with the photographer, who had made Mademoiselle Tourbillon and Pierre promise to attend the trial and who had been most anxiously expecting them. Even the Marquis de St. Angel was seen to leave his place beside the prosecuting attorney to consult with the group. "I have been completely duped," said the photographer detective. "I might have known that the serpent-charmer and your gamekeeper's son were fooling me; but that boy had the face of innocence itself, and seemed so eager to attend the trial that I was completely taken in. Of course they have now escaped beyond our reach."

"Perhaps something has hindered them, and they may still arrive," said the Marquis.

"Has the defence nothing further to bring forward?" asked the judge.

"May it please your honour," said the attorney, "we expected two important witnesses who have not yet arrived."

Again the murmur from the spectators, articulate now: "No need of any further witnesses; the dog has convicted himself and his master." Again the detective shook his head angrily, and said in a low voice: "They will not come, they have out-tricked me. I give up my profession."

"No, do not drop the case yet," the Marquis de St. Angel whispered; "find the necklace and the boy; bring both to me at any cost."

Sentence was accordingly pronounced upon the innocent Nagy Pal, who was sent to prison, and his dogs ordered to be sold, for the benefit of the persons who had been robbed, the sale being set for the following week. Scarcely had the court-room cleared, when Mademoiselle Tourbillon arrived just too late. The detective, who had awaited her so anxiously, had gone away convinced that both she and Pierre were accomplices of Nagy Pal's who must be brought to justice in order to discover the lost necklace. He returned to St. Cloud and to Robinson, and, finding that both the Variétés Amusantes and the serpent-charmer had vanished, set him-

self to the task of tracing them. He concluded at once that St.-Germain would be the locality which they would expressly avoid, and that, though their business would take them to some one of the fêtes next occurring, they would probably choose one remote from Paris. He consulted the "Almanach des Foires et Fêtes," and his eye was caught by the "Pilgrimage Pardon" at St. Anne d'Auray. It seemed to him that Zizi had spoken of it. Yes, when he had first inquired for Pierre, she had said that his employer, the dompteur, had gone there. It was very possible that the other mountebanks would ultimately join the lion-tamer at this distant point, and the detective at once purchased a ticket for Brittany.

Finding herself too late for the trial, Mademoiselle visited Nagy Pal in his prison; and he begged her to be present at the sale of his dogs, which was well advertised and would be attended by many dog-fanciers, and ascertain for him the names and addresses of the purchasers of the dogs, with a view to buying them back in the future. "I would not mind the loss of the others," he said, "whose places I could readily supply; but Rigolette and Rigolo, whom I have trained with so much

care, and whom I love as if they were my own children ! I would ask you to buy them now and take them to Minka to keep them for me, were it not that I have already taxed the friendship of my partner and Zizi to its utmost in asking them to care for my child until I can join them."

Mademoiselle explained that Minka was in her care for the present, and promised to bring her to see her father ; she assured him that she would purchase and care for Rigolette and Rigolo and Zulu.

"No, not Zulu," Nagy Pal replied bitterly ; "though I love him still, I never wish to see him again ; he has disgraced and ruined me."

As Mademoiselle walked back toward her camp, she noticed a van at a little distance from the road half concealed by a thicket of stunted willows. As she regarded it curiously, she saw the white turban of Asoka moving about above the low bushes.

"Ah !" she said to herself, "it is the establishment of our good friend the prestidigitateur. Why is he waiting here ? Without doubt it is to attend the sale of Nagy Pal's dogs. Very good ; I will wait also. The photographer promised to send me my photographs here ; perhaps he will send his address,

or will himself come to inquire why I failed to attend the trial. If so, I will tell him that Signor Stromboli is here. Oh! I will not give up the fight yet; and if he buys the robber-dog, I shall have another link in my chain, and perhaps we can get a new trial for the dog-trainer."

On her arrival at her camp Mademoiselle found that Pierre's condition alone would have necessitated a halt of several days. He was in a high fever, and during the time that elapsed before the sale of the dogs, his condition was very critical.

Minka was of great assistance during this anxious time, not alone as nurse, a post which she evidently preferred, but also as maid-of-all-work. The girl was unwearied, always ready to turn her hand to whatever was needed, to run on errands, to take up any task. It was difficult to tell when she slept, and she began to look hollow-eyed and worn, though she never complained. As Pierre recovered, she grew positively cheerful in spite of her weariness. Her wild locks were carefully combed and plaited, and she employed odd moments while tending him in mending her torn clothing and in giving little feminine touches to her scant toilet. She brought him

flowers and berries, and cooked his gruel with great care, lamenting that she had no money to buy white sugar to make it palatable. She could not read, and was deeply mortified when Pierre asked her to read aloud to him from a volume of Béranger's Songs, which Mademoiselle lent him. He read aloud to her instead; and she took a fancy to Roger Bontemps, and improvised a rollicking air for it.

“ His father's hat each festal day
Was good enough for him,
Instead of band an ivy spray,
A rose within the brim.

“ Within his hut a crazy bed,
Its covering old and thin,
A table bare, a sweet-toned flute,
A chest, and nought therein.

“ His prayer to Heaven this simple lay,
Which daily he would sing, —
‘ Grant that my latest dying day
Be gay as is my spring.’ ”

Minka would decorate her own hat with ivy, and as her deft fingers gave the modiste's touch to this economical coiffure, would sing gayly, —

“ Du chapeau de son père
Coiffé dans les grands jours,
De roses ou de lierre
La réjouir toujours;”

and Pierre would sing in reply, —

“ Que votre saison dernière
Soit encore un printemps :
Eh, gai ! c'est la prière
Du gros Roger Bontemps.”

It seemed to Pierre that the girl had a balloon for a heart, she was always so cheerful with him. He did not see that this gayety was assumed to cheer him, or notice the almost maternal look of solicitude with which she watched him. He grew content with his captivity, and when Minka returned from her farewell visit to her father the day that he was taken to a distant prison, and the proud girl broke down and sobbed upon his shoulder, he comforted her in his turn, saying, —

“Cheer up, dear Minka. If you will not go to the Marquise, as I would like, I will stay with you, and help take care of you after I am well. I can at least earn as much as Roger Bontemps had, and he was happy.”

Mademoiselle came in at that moment, and Pierre announced his decision to her, adding :

"Here is all the money which I earned at Robinson. Take it, please, Mademoiselle, and buy Rigolette and Rigolo at the sale. I can exercise dogs. It was I who taught Popotte all her tricks. I will keep the dogs for Nagy Pal until he is out of prison again, and I will give half the money which I earn to Minka."

"That is a good idea," replied Mademoiselle, "and we will act upon it."

She was surprised not to see Signor Stromboli at the sale. Zulu was knocked down at a fancy price to a breeder of blooded dogs. Apparently the notoriety which he had acquired as a thief had increased his value, for the breeder seemed determined to secure him at any price. Mademoiselle purchased Rigolette and Rigolo, though it took all of Pierre's little hoard to effect this. The other dogs were scattered, and Mademoiselle found that their owners considered as an impertinence her request that the dog-trainer should have the privilege of repurchasing them, and in no case could she obtain any encouragement. The horse sold at a good price, but there were no other bidders for the van, and Mademoiselle obtained it and its furniture at a nominal price. Two stout Percheron horses drew the

waggon, which her brother drove, and carried her tent and the planks which served as benches; and she decided that the dog-trainer's roulette could be attached behind this waggon, and would serve as an additional apartment at night for the accommodation of Pierre and the two dogs.

Leading Rigolette and Rigolo, she returned through the forest to her camp, intending to send her brother with the horses for the roulette, and hastening her steps, as she remembered that the physician was to visit Pierre that afternoon, and that she wished to ask him how soon they might continue their journey if a hammock was swung in the roulette in which Pierre could lie without being endangered by the jolting of the van.

In a lonely part of the wood she met a tall man dressed as a peasant, and in spite of the blue blouse and wide-brimmed straw hat she recognised the prestidigitateur.

"Why are you here?" he asked. Then, answering his own question, "You came to attend the trial, hoping to do me a mischief, and you have made a mistake in the date and find yourself too late. Is it not so? They spoke of a witness whom they expected. It was you, then! No wonder you can charm

serpents, — you are a serpent yourself. Well, you have failed; but all the same I shall remember your good intentions and I will repay you for them. Never fear but you shall be well paid.”

This taunt and threat drove Mademoiselle wild. For the moment she lost her head, and replied with impolitic frankness: “You would not guess my errand if you were not guilty. You say I have failed, but you are not through with me yet. They have imprisoned one man, but they will not be satisfied until they have found the necklace. I know who has it, and the Marquis de St. Angel shall know before I leave St.-Germain. You have more cause to be afraid of me than I of you. If you dare to come near my roulette, I will set Coco on you.”

“Serpent and companion of serpents,” hissed Signor Stromboli, “go back to your relations. It is by your snakes that you make your living; it is by them that you will meet your death.”

Mademoiselle laughed. “I prefer the friendship of my serpents to your friendship,” she screamed in parting; “they are more attractive and less treacherous.”

She tripped past him with her head well



SIGNOR STROMBOLI IN DISGUISE

up, making a brave show of defiance ; but she heard him following her, and at the first turning she ran for dear life, for she believed him capable of any villainy. She had still to pass his encampment, and as she did so she saw Asoka standing in front of the roulette, holding two dogs in leash, Zulu and Popotte. She was so excited from her encounter with Signor Stromboli, and so astonished at the discovery of both dogs in his possession, that she said not a word to the East Indian, but hurried on to her own home.

Signor Stromboli had secured the capture of the black poodle in the following manner.

The purchaser of Zulu had left the poodle in charge of the groom at the stable of the inn while he took dinner. The other dogs had also been tied here while their masters sat over their wine. A tall peasant in a blue blouse lounged into the stable, and began to chat with the groom. Suddenly the sound of neighing was heard in the stable yard and the man dashed out thinking that a horse was loose. He was astonished to find the yard empty, and returned much puzzled. Signor Stromboli was a ventriloquist as well as prestidigitateur, and he had imitated the neighing of a horse so exactly as to deceive

this groom, who had lived all his life in the company of horses. In the instant while the groom had been out of the stable Signor Stromboli had cut Zulu's cord, and the dog had bounded out of the open door and down the street. He had been uneasy for some minutes, for Asoka had passed the stable door leading Popotte, and she had recognised him, and barked a piteous call to him as she passed. Down the street raced Zulu, Asoka quickening his pace as he saw him coming, and turning down a lane which led out of town and into the forest. The peasant in the blue blouse remained in the stable and chatted with the groom, until, dinner being over, the guests of the inn came out for their vehicles and dogs. Just as Zulu's purchaser appeared the peasant slouched away. He walked out of town in an opposite direction from that taken by Asoka, intending to rejoin his man in the forest where the van was waiting. Mademoiselle Tourbillon had met the prestidigitateur, and had passed Asoka while he was still waiting for his master, who arrived a few minutes later, and was very angry when he ascertained from Asoka that Mademoiselle Tourbillon had seen both dogs in his possession. When the signor was angry,

he was not agreeable, but Asoka knew how to appease him. He went into the van, fastened the dogs, and lighted a tiny pipe, which he brought out to his master. "Have good dream," he said, smiling; "forget all about bad girl. She no can do mischief."

Signor Stromboli followed Asoka into the roulette, and, lying down on the bed, took the opium pipe from his hand; but he only allowed himself a single inspiration, for he wished to direct his waking dream. It was not to be a good dream, and he did not wish to forget the girl who had angered him; on the contrary, he wanted the aid of the opium to suggest some fantastic and terrible revenge. As he mused, he seemed to see her in her tableau of the Medusa's head. The snakes writhed and erected themselves as they were accustomed to do; but among them there was a small snake different from any that he had ever seen in Mademoiselle's collection. It had a flat head and a hooded neck, which it slowly inflated. It paid no attention to its lively comrades, but softly crept through the girl's curling locks until it poised itself above her temple, where it wavered for an instant with quivering fangs, then struck suddenly at a blue vein, and

that marvellous smile left the sweet face as it instantly contorted in fearful agony, and after terrible convulsions finally became rigid in death. Signor Stromboli laughed aloud and sat up.

"Have good dream?" asked Asoka. "Not last long, — only three little minute."

"Long enough," Signor Stromboli replied. "and a good dream, Asoka, a very good dream. Do you remember the day you went to the Jardin d'Acclimatation with me, and you pointed out to me a little serpent of your country which you said was very poisonous?"

"Yes, me remember — swamp adder, one bad smally snaky shut up in lil cage by self, killee many people, killee quick, Doctor no can cure."

"That's right, Asoka, that's the snake. Do you think you could steal it for me?"

"What for want swamp adder — for give Mademoiselle Tourbillon?"

"Yes, Asoka. She has taken a fancy that she would like one, and you said you could make it follow the sound of that little whistle of yours. Now couldn't you manage to persuade the guardian to let you go inside the glass house, and when he was busy about something else whistle that snake into a box

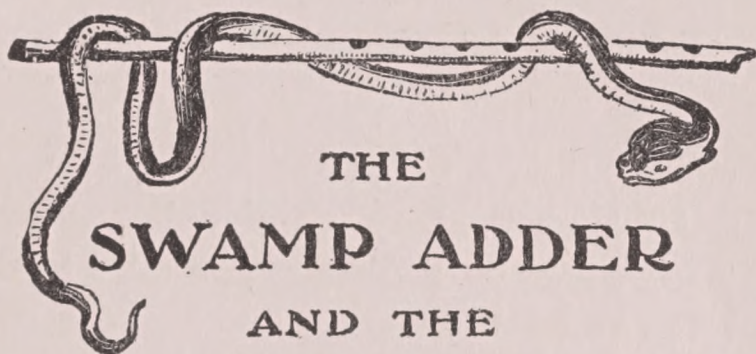
which you would have with you and bring him away for me this afternoon?"

Asoka nodded: "Oh, yes! guard man very friendly, think Asoka big snake sahib — let me go in already, say how do to snakes. Catchee smally snaky all right, but it all same very bad lil snaky. Mademoiselle not can charm, maybe get kill pretty quick."

"Look here, Asoka. Of course I will take out poison fangs before I give it to Mademoiselle. You talkee too much, Asoka. Go catchee snakee, catchee right away."



Chapter 8



SWAMP ADDER AND THE PILGRIMAGE PARDON

MADemoisELLE TOURBILLON found the physician awaiting her at her camp. He reported that Pierre no longer required his visits, and might travel as she had suggested. Later in the afternoon Mademoiselle's brother returned with the gypsy roulette, and over their dinner a council was held as to their next destination. On her visit to her father, Minka had obtained Nagy Pal's permission to remain with Mademoiselle instead of joining the Variétés Amusantes at Chantilly. The girl seemed to have lost all desire to see the races. She no longer talked of circus-riding, but had

purchased a spelling-book and was laboriously learning to read under Pierre's instruction.

"I can learn more songs if I know how to read," she said; "and if Pierre is sick again, I can read stories to him and amuse him."

"But I am not going to be sick again," Pierre replied. "I am going to get well right away, and help support you by putting Rigolette and Rigolo through their tricks."

"That is all very well," said Mademoiselle; "but where are we to go? The best fêtes of the environs of Paris are over now. The fête season begins at Easter with the Fête du Trone, or Gingerbread Fair, at the Place de la Nation in Paris, and then comes the prettiest one of all, that of Neuilly in June, just after the Bataille des Fleurs, and the Grand Prix with which the fashionable people celebrate the coming of spring. They haven't all scattered for the summer at that time; and the Parisians flock out to Neuilly, and make themselves merry all through the fête, just as the English people used to go a-Maying long ago before they had forgotten how to be jolly."

"What is the next fête?" Pierre asked.

"That of the 14th of July; but it is our national fête, and is celebrated all over France, and not confined to any town, though it is finest at Paris."

"It must be a great saint's day," Minka said, "since every one makes such a fuss about it."

"It is not a church fête," Mademoiselle replied, "but a patriotic one, because they pulled the Bastile down on that day. The Bastile was a prison."

"That's good," said Minka; "I think they might have pulled down all the prisons while they were about it. We always go to Paris for the 14th of July, and camp either on the Avenue Clichy in the north of the town, or on the Place d'Italie on the south."

"I went to the Bois de Boulogne once with the little Marquis on the 14th of July," said Pierre. "There was a grand review of the troops. You should have seen the charge of the Cuirassiers. Oh, but it was fine!"

"I could never spare the time to see that," said Mademoiselle. "The 14th of July is always one of our busiest days; but in the evening I close my tent and go down to one of the bridges to see the illuminations and

the Fête Vénitienne on the Seine, with all the fireworks at the Hôtel de Ville. Some of the streets are always roped off for dancing. The city erects stands for the musicians, and pays them to play all night; and all night long bands of students with their sweethearts roam through the streets, walking with locked arms, six abreast, singing uproariously, and joining in the different dances. O la, la! but I have amused myself those nights! We always stay in Paris for a fortnight after the fête, for people do not tire of being merry right away, and the city is full of saltimbanques and other travelling showmen. After that they begin to straggle away to different fêtes and fairs in the neighbouring villages. Every *paroisse* has its *fête patronale*, with a high mass and a procession on Sunday, and its different *divertissements* for a week or more. Sometimes it is all for the children, with a distribution of prizes by the mayor and his lady at the ending of the Lycée; and there are sports and games, — the game of scissors for the girls and races for the boys, or a *jeu de paume* (ball game), or a joust with the lance for rings. Sometimes the riflemen have a *lacher de pigrons*, or target practice, or there

is a regatta on the water, or manœuvres of the firemen, or velocipede races, or maybe a balloon ascension; but always and everywhere there will be dancing at night, and music of some sort, either of a military band or of some other kind; and always our travelling show people are welcomed to help make things gay. Good luck for us that it is so, else how should we live? But after the Fête des Loges and the Fête de St. Cloud there is very little going on in the way of fêtes near Paris."

"I know why that is," said Pierre; "it is because the Ouverture de la Chasse comes in September, and every one who owns a dog and a gun goes to visit his friends in the country, and chases the poor little wild things. All through the summer the pheasants were as tame as barnyard fowls in the St. Angel game preserves, and the quail would almost eat out of my hands. You saw yourself, Minka, how thick the rabbits were, and the little reed birds would hop along over the lily-pads, and the wild duck settle down all around me when I was out in a boat on the lake; but pouf! after the first party left the château in the drag, to fill their pouches in our forest, and my

father beat up the game with old Diane, our best pointer, why, after that you would have thought the rabbits had emigrated for America."

"Don't talk about the château any longer," said Minka, scowling. "I dare say it is just as you say, and that the stupid guests have killed some of your best dogs with their bad shots, and would have killed you by this time if you had stayed. Mademoiselle is waiting for you to tell her where you would like to go next."

"Mademoiselle knows that I do not care. I want only to find Popotte; so I suppose we must find out where the prestidigitateur is going and go there too."

"The prestidigitateur," said Mademoiselle; "he is here, encamped at the crossing of the next avenue, and Popotte and Zulu are with him. I saw them this afternoon."

Pierre sprang from his bed, but Mademoiselle gently forced him back. "No, you are not strong enough. Besides, what can you do?"

"I will make him give up Popotte and have him arrested."

"I do not see how you can do either the one or the other. The photographer detec-

tive has not sent me the photographs which he took of me, nor has he sent me any address to which I can write him."

"But we can write the Marquis de St. Angel, and that I will do at once, and he will know how to put the officers on his track."

"Yes; do that right away," replied Mademoiselle. "I shall not lift a finger to keep him from prison; but he will not stay here long, now that he has secured Zulu; he will be off. I wish we could tell the Marquis where he is going."

"Do find that out, Mademoiselle; he will tell you, I am sure, and do please make him give you Popotte. Go and see him now, for he may go away in the morning."

"I shall never go near him or speak to him again," said Mademoiselle. "No, not for a hundred Popottes, or even for you, dear boy. He is a bad man; he threatened my life in the forest, and, yes, I will confess it, I, who was never afraid of any creature in my life, — I am afraid of him."

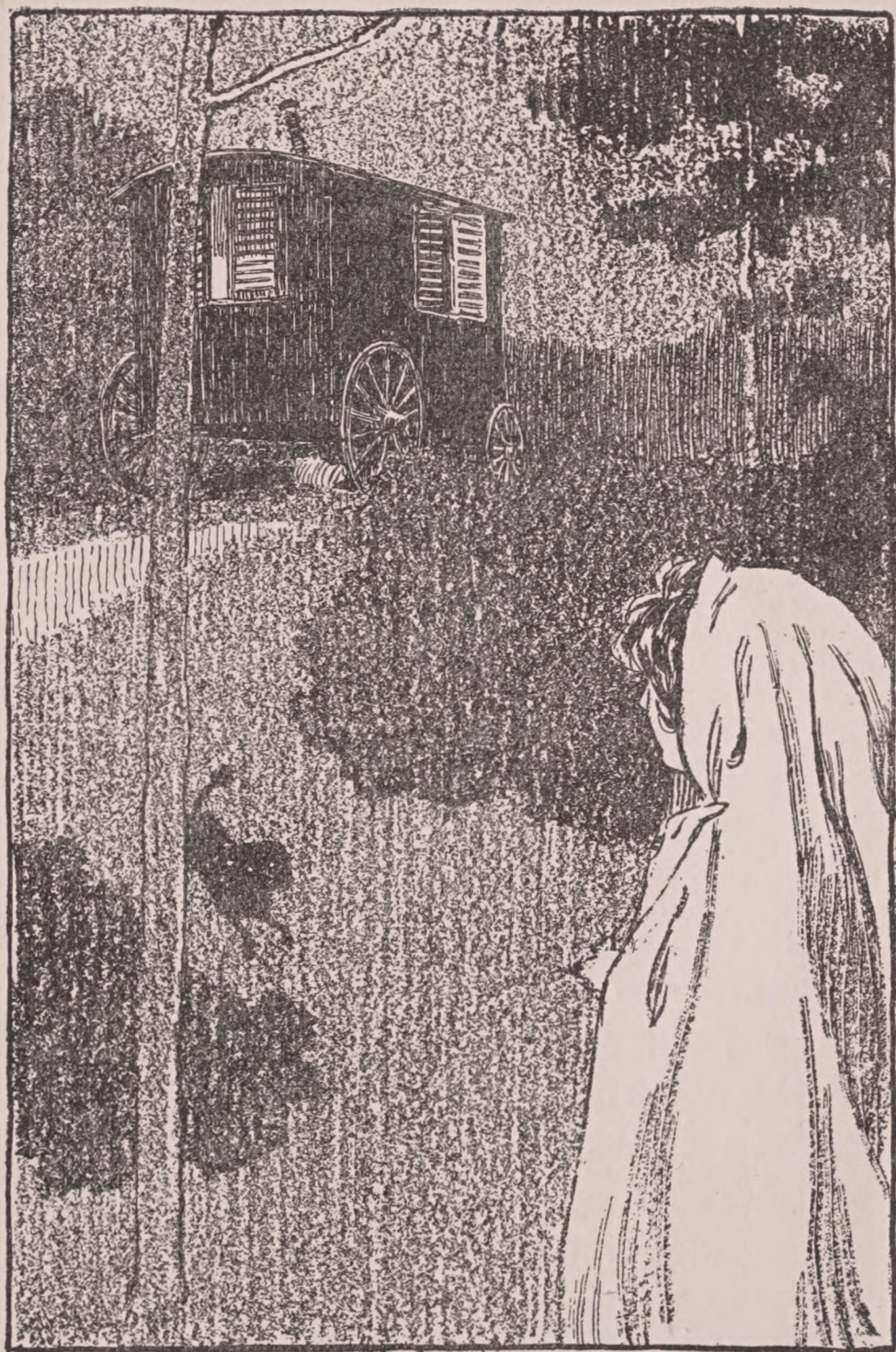
"I am not afraid of him," said Minka. "He has caused my father to be unjustly imprisoned; he has our Zulu and your

Popotte. I will go to his roulette and demand them both."

She threw a little shawl over her head, and strode angrily away. Pierre called her back: "Don't go alone, Minka. He may do you a mischief. Oh, how I wish I could go with you!"

But Minka strode on through the darkening forest until she saw the light streaming as from the eyes of some dragon from the two tiny windows of the roulette. Then she paused, not from fear but because of the sudden thought, "If I bring back Popotte, Pierre will stay with us no longer, but will go back to the château."

Her eyes had become accustomed to the dusk, and she could see something white moving about under the van. It was Popotte, who was tethered to the wheel. Suddenly she heard a rustle, a stealthy step, and a dark form leaped upon her. She sank to the ground with fright, then recovered herself as she realised that this was neither wild beast nor malignant human being, but Zulu, whose quick scent had recognised her, and who had broken loose and was covering her with doggish caresses. She held his nose firmly in a way which her father had



MINKA SEEKS POPOTTE BY NIGHT

taught him, signified that he must not bark, and, leading him back to the prestidigitateur's van, tied him more firmly to the wheel. "It breaks my heart to leave you, Zulu," she said, as the dog whined his protestations, "but my father has said that he will not take you back; and though I love you, I cannot forgive you that you have ruined him. You are a bad dog, Zulu, and you must stay with your bad companions."

Popotte stole up to her and licked her hands. "Poor little weasel!" she said, "how happy *mon ami Pierot* would be to hold you in his arms again! But no, even the charm that binds and holds would not keep him with us then."

She tightened the knot and slipped back to the road, when Zulu, feeling himself deserted and restrained from following her, howled dismally. The door of the roulette opened; Asoka came out, and, having kicked Zulu, walked toward her. Fancying herself discovered, Minka fled down the road to the camp, and, dashing into the tent where Mademoiselle and her brother were sitting by Pierre's bedside, she told them that she had been interrupted while untying Popotte, and had been chased by the East Indian.

In effect Asoka really did lift the tent curtain a few moments later, but he had not intentionally followed Minka. He stood gravely salaaming until the serpent-charmer bade him enter, when he placed a cocoanut on the ground at her feet, saying, "Little present for great lady. Nice smallee snakee from Asoka's country, for lady to charm."

"Is there a serpent in that coacoanut?" Mademoiselle asked.

Asoka nodded, and, removing the upper portion of the shell, which had been sawed into two sections, he showed a small adder coiled in a nest of the fibre. Then, squatting in front of it, Asoka took from the folds of his robe a pipe of bamboo, and began to play upon it. The reptile erected itself, and waved its head to and fro in time to the music; then, as its character changed to a sort of lullaby, recoiled itself and seemingly returned to a dormant condition.

"Easy tune to learn," said Asoka, handing Mademoiselle the pipe; "make nice show."

Mademoiselle took the pipe, and, Asoka showing her how to place her fingers, she was able to excite and calm the snake in the same manner. "That will make quite a new

feature in my exhibition," she said gratefully. "You are very good, Asoka, to make me such a nice present. How did you get it, and what shall I give it to eat?"

"Bought cocoanuts," Asoka said, lying calmly. "One bad nut, little hole inside. Lay nut in sun, smallee snakee come out. Catchee for you. Not need much eat; catchee flies; drink lil drop milk. Nice snakee for trick when lady have snakes in hair."

"Are you sure it is not a poisonous snake?" Mademoiselle asked. "I do not know that variety."

"No can hurt; poison gone; baby play in our country all same baby here play smallee cat."

By this, Asoka, who had been previously instructed by Signor Stromboli as to exactly what he should say, desired to convey the impression that the adder was as harmless as a kitten.

"You always were a good friend of mine, Asoka," Mademoiselle said kindly, "and I will tell you what I would like even more than a new snake for my collection, and that is the little dog which Signor Stromboli gave me and took back again."

Asoka shrugged his shoulders. "My master not like me give you that."

"But you might leave her untied," said Pierre, "and you need not know what has become of her."

"Me see," replied Asoka.

"Where are you going next?" asked Mademoiselle; "and when do you leave St.-Germain?"

"Going far off to pilgrimage in Brittany, where the lion sahib go."

"You mean to St. Anne d'Auray, where the dompteur went?"

"Yes; going morrow morning very early. Where lady going?"

"I have not decided yet. Leave the little dog behind you, Asoka, and I will give you a nice present when I see you next."

Asoka grinned and salaamed, and backed out of the tent.

Mademoiselle took up the cocoanut, and, carrying it into her own van, placed it in an empty cage. "That snake will make a nice little end man for my fillet just above my ear in the Medusa tableau," she said to herself. "He erects himself with exactly the same curve that I have noticed in a copy of an old Egyptian picture of Cleopatra. I

can teach Minka to play the pipe and keep him swaying to and fro during the representation. I am quite impatient to try him."

Minka was bidding Pierre good-night. "You will go again, Minka, will you not," he pleaded, "and see if Asoka has untied Popotte? You need not go very close to the roulette, but only where she will hear you call. I shall be so grateful to you if you can get her for me. I know you will if you can, dear Minka, because you love me so."

Minka nodded, and went out into the night. "I am wicked, wicked," she said to herself. "I could not look him in the face to-night. What was it he said about duty? 'It is that which we must do whether we like it or not, because we know that if we do not we cannot look straight into the eyes of those who love us.' Oh! this duty is a very fearful thing. I shall never be able to look him in the eyes again. He said I would do it because I loved him; it must be, then, that I will not because I love myself, for if I loved him I would want to make him happy. Oh! Pierot, Pierot! I do love you better than myself, and whatever happens you shall have your Popotte."

The moon had risen, and she found her way easily to the van of the prestidigitateur; but there were no dogs tethered beneath it. Thinking that Asoka had possibly released them, she called them at first softly and then more loudly, and was answered by a furious barking and scratching on the inside of the door of the van. The suspicious East Indian had taken the alarm, and had secured the dogs against her stratagems by fastening them within the roulette.

Pierre, though disappointed, was not entirely disheartened, especially as Mademoiselle announced her decision the next morning to follow the prestidigitateur to Brittany. Pierre wrote to the Marquis as he had determined to do, and Minka mailed the letter as they passed through the town. Though they had started early, when they passed the prestidigitateur's place of encampment they saw that he had already gone, but his camp-fire, still smouldering, seemed to prove that he could be only an hour ahead of them, and that they would soon overtake him.

St. Anne d'Auray was a long way from Paris and from the château of St. Angel.

Pierre realised this as the vans crept slowly up the hills, which gave him ever fainter and fainter backward views of towns which had themselves looked far away when they set out. They were plunging into an unknown country, the province of Sarthe, and all was unfamiliar. The peasants spoke a different patois, and the pastures were covered with flocks of geese. Myriads, they seemed, as one white cloud of them after another stretched away over the green fields. The hillside slopes were ruby red with patches of buckwheat, whose white blossoms a little earlier had powdered the fields with summer snow. Next they passed through an interminable apple orchard. Apples lay by the roadside in disregarded heaps, and hung overhead, green and russet and red. Pierre had never imagined there could be so many apples in the world, and they were free to eat as many as they pleased, and cider was almost as cheap as water. The smell of apples, and the noise of sabots clattering merrily over cobble-stones, always came back to Pierre in after days when any one said Normandy. Farther on there were wayside crosses, and the landes grew more level and barren, and there were whiffs of sea air blown

across the downs. There were more women working in the fields now, for the men were away at the fisheries, and the children were gathering mistletoe to send to England for Christmas festivities, of which they themselves knew nothing; and there were hideous beggars, mere bundles of rags, as well as troops of sturdy young women in wonderful starched caps and gold earrings trudging along to the Pardon, for now they were in Brittany. Pierre even doubted that he could find his way back alone; but his sinking, home-sick heart was comforted by the assurance that in November they would return to Paris; and as by that time surely he would have found Popotte, it would be a triumphal home-coming. How rejoiced the young Marquis would be to hug his pet to his heart once more! Of his mother's happiness at seeing him, and his own joy on feeling her arms about his neck, he scarcely dared think. A mist of happy tears dimmed his eyes at the mere thought that sometime this might be.

And all the time this healthful out-of-door life and gentle jogging on through varied and interesting scenes was doing Pierre good physically. He walked beside

the cart now, and sometimes climbed the apple-trees for mere pleasure.

Whenever they halted at night they would give a little performance, — sometimes at a market, where the peasants spread their fruits and cheese in the public square of some village, or in the barn of a rich farmer. Once it was at a mossy mill, which peeped from under its hood of golden brown thatch like a pretty peasant from under her coif. It was wonderful how quickly the news of their coming circulated and an audience collected. The miller gave them leave to use his sheds, and the miller's boys rolled in barrels and laid planks across them for seats, and then cleared them out for a dance after the exhibition; one of them going to the next town with a donkey to fetch over a fiddler. It happened that he was a very fair musician, and Minka was delighted with his playing, and he with hers. He had wished to go to the Pilgrimage, and he offered to teach Minka if Mademoiselle would take him, and so the old man was added to the troupe.

On Saturday night they usually managed to halt beside some church. Sometimes it was only a chapel at a cross-roads, which

lifted its tiny belfry above a little cemetery, which did duty for four villages. Here the troupe would attend early mass, and the entire congregation, not excepting the curé, would reciprocate by honouring their performance. At large towns they would frequently obtain the mayor's permission to give their exhibition in the public sheds provided for the markets, and once in Normandy they assisted at a *foire aux chevaux*, or fair of great Percheron horses, such as Rosa Bonheur painted in her celebrated picture.

Pierre had learned to show off Rigolette and Rigolo very cleverly, though he often mourned that he had not Popotte as well, and insisted on her superior intelligence. Minka did not contradict him at these times. Her conscience smote her, and the knowledge that she had had it in her power to restore Pierre's pet became a burden more and more intolerable. His very trustfulness was a reproach. The spell held, she had her will; he remained with her, utterly unsuspecting any malign influences. Her will was his will, and he was her cheerful, loving slave. But she was not happy; she could no longer look him in the face, for

she was certain that if he knew the truth he would despise and hate her. Questions of right and wrong had never troubled her before she knew him; but "remorse is virtue's root," and her soul was growing through humiliation and repentant pain, yearning and groping in the darkness for a nobler life. She looked as earnestly as Pierre now for any signs of the prestidigitateur's van; but they neither passed it on the way nor heard of its having gone on before. Mademoiselle thought it probable that he had taken another route, and was sure that they would find him established in the public place at Auray. She had not given her Medusa tableau on the way, reserving it for the Pardon Pilgrimage; but she had announced this crowning attraction at each of her performances, certain that fame would travel faster with curiosity as its coachman. So the swamp adder slept in his nest of cocoanut fibre waiting his time, like a venomous secret, to strike to the death; and Minka took lessons of the old musician, and, tortured with self-reproach, sang her songs with such pathos that people wondered how so young a girl had acquired a voice of such sympathetic quality.

At last on a golden October day they drove into Auray. The dompteur's menagerie was a principal feature among the nomad tents pitched in front of the old church, and hearty was the welcome given by Maximilienne, Adrienne, and Augustine to their old friend Minka and to Pierre. But the dompteur's family had seen nothing of the Escarpalette Diabolique, with its Satanic pictures, or the signor in his scarlet Mephistophelian hood, or Asoka's dark face framed by his halo of white turban.

"They are not here," Adrienne asserted; and they were all satisfied that this must be true, for when Augustine, who had been taught the catechism, had been told that no one had seen God, she had asked, "Not even Adrienne?" and being assured that even her sister's prying eyes had not been granted this privilege, she shook her small head incredulously and replied positively, "What Adrienne has not seen cannot exist."

Adrienne had other news for Pierre. A photographer who had attended their exhibition a number of times, and had taken pictures of the tigress, had inquired for Pierre with great interest, as well as for Mademoiselle Tourbillon and Minka. He

had said that he was a special friend of Mademoiselle's, and had shown Adrienne some photographs which he had taken of her in her famous tableau. "He promised to send Mademoiselle some of them, but he never did," said Pierre; and Adrienne agreed to find him and tell him that Mademoiselle had arrived and claimed her photographs.

"There is another man here who wants to see Mademoiselle Tourbillon," said Adrienne, — "I never did see people in such request, — and that is Professor Saumur."

"Professor Saumur," repeated Pierre. "I have heard that name, but I don't know where."

"Well, he knows about Mademoiselle, or rather Coco, for it is really Coco whom he wants to see. He is a dermatologist and a tax-collector; no, not that, a collector of beasts and a tax — tax — oh! I know, a tax-idermist and zoölogist. He came here all the way from Paris to get Sirocco."

"Why, Sirocco is your father's tigress that I washed."

"And that jumped at you. Well, she jumped at father, too, and he decided not to keep her; so he put an advertisement in the Paris papers, and Professor Saumur came

down to buy her; but he decided that she was too dangerous even for a menagerie, so they killed her, and he is stuffing her in a barn. I'll take you to see."

"All right; but what did he want of Mademoiselle Tourbillon?"

"When the photographer was showing us the photographs, Professor Saumur was there, and he saw them too, and he said: 'That must be the serpent-charmer that my friend Dr. Somebody had such an interesting experience with at the Fête des Loges. She has a fine boa-constrictor which nearly killed a boy that night. I have been trying to find her to make her an offer for it.' "

"Mademoiselle would no more sell Coco than she would sell Minka," Pierre replied; "but I would like to see the man stuff the tiger. Will he let me in?"

"Of course not, but I know a way through a granary to a loft where we can lie on the hay and look down. I watched him skin the creature. It was awfully interesting. I'm afraid they have taken away the carcass; but come along."

Adrienne slipped stealthily to her place of observation, but Pierre was not so adroit, and some hay fell into the barn below, and

the taxidermist looked up from his work. "So you are there, my little barn owl with the great eyes, watching me as usual; but who said you might bring company? Your friend there would not be so anxious to come if this tigress were alive."

"He was not afraid of Sirocco even then," Adrienne replied. "He went into her cage and gave her a bath."

"So that is the boy of whom I have heard your father and the photographer speak. Come down, my boy, and let me have a look at you."

Pierre clambered to the floor, and stood looking at the strange model on which Professor Saumur was at work, preparatory to covering it with the tiger's skin. He was winding the legs with yarn in order to get just the right shape to the different curves. He showed Pierre some photographs which had been taken from Sirocco herself, and also some others from statues of tigers by Barye.

"Barye was a famous sculptor of animals," he explained. "He was my teacher, not in art, but I attended the lectures on the comparative anatomy of animals which he gave at the Jardin des Plantes in Paris."

Pierre was intensely interested. He stayed as long as he felt that he could be spared, and begged leave to come again. "Whenever you please," said Professor Saumur; and as he corrected his figure, carrying out a criticism which Pierre had made, he said to himself, "That boy has remarkable powers of observation; he would make a capital student in original research."

Pierre spent all the time that he could in Professor Saumur's laboratory, and the Professor gave him a book on animals which interested him even more than Jules Verne's stories had done, for he was assured that it was all true. The Professor told him stories, too, of hunts for wild animals in the jungles, and how he had shot a tiger larger than Sirocco, but had not wounded it mortally, for it had escaped, and though the beaters had tracked it into the forest by the blood, they had been afraid to follow it far. Pierre looked surprised, almost scornful. "Why didn't you shoot it in the brain?" he asked.

"It is not easy to calculate so nicely," the Professor replied, "especially when your hand trembles with excitement."

"My father has hunted all kinds of wild animals that we have in France," Pierre replied; "and he never misses a shot. His hand never trembles, but I suppose that is because he is never excited."

They were walking down the principal street of the town as they talked, and the Professor stopped before a shooting-gallery, one of the booths that had been set up to catch the pennies of the pilgrims.

"I will show you that I am not a bad shot when I am not excited," he said; and he broke the glass ball that danced on a jet of water at the end of the gallery nine times out of ten trials.

"Would you also like to try?" he said smiling, and handing the gun to Pierre.

"I have never shot balls," the boy replied, "but I have shot wild-fowl, and I would like to try."

Ten times the rifle cracked, and this time ten balls instead of nine were broken.

"You are a better shot than I am," said the Professor. "I would like to take you with me the next time I go out to Africa."

"Oh! will you?" Pierre exclaimed, his face radiant with delight.

"I will, indeed. I am going after Christ-

mas, and if you like you may go as my servant, but I will teach you all I can about zoölogy whenever we have time."

"Oh! thank you, thank you," Pierre exclaimed, and he darted off in ecstasy to tell Minka of his good fortune. A gentleman who saw him running sprang after him, and seized him firmly by the shoulder. As they stood glaring at each other breathlessly, Professor Saumur came up.

"So you have nabbed another subject for your camera," he said pleasantly; "that was a snap shot with a drop shutter."

"A subject that has given me more trouble in catching than any other in my professional career," replied the detective, "but I have him safely at last;" and his grip tightened as he spoke.

"Well, when you are through with him pass him over to me," said Professor Saumur, "as he has just promised to go to Africa with me."

"I haven't the slightest doubt that he would like to do so, but I am sorry to say that he is wanted in another direction, and that it is my duty to postpone that little excursion, as I have a warrant for his arrest in my pocket."

“Arrest!” Pierre exclaimed indignantly, “and for what?”

“You know well enough, you young rascal, but Professor Saumur should know also. It is for stealing the Marquise de St. Angel’s ruby necklace.”



Chapter 9



THE reason that Mademoiselle Tourbillon's little troupe had not overtaken Signor Stromboli on their way to Brittany or discovered him at the Pardon was a very simple one. He had never had any intention of going there, and the perfidious man had instructed Asoka to make them believe that this was his destination, in order to have them as far away from his own neighbourhood as possible when the tragedy which he had planned in the gift of the adder should take place. Mademoiselle should have seen through this very simple trick, for she had

threatened the signor that she would put the officers of the law upon his track, and for this reason alone it was only natural that he should wish to deceive her as to his destination.

While Mademoiselle was hastening in a southwesterly direction, Signor Stromboli stole away to the North of Paris, and began a series of performances at Chantilly, which was filled to overflowing with sporting-people who had arrived a little before the races. Many of them were jockeys and turfmen, but there were also a number of idle loungers of the wealthy class, who had come to see the horses practised in order to get points for betting, and who had brought plenty of money to risk. There were not lacking as well professional gamblers and tricksters, who regarded these young men as their legitimate prey, and large sums of money changed hands within a short radius of the handsome ecuries. The prestidigitateur drew full houses, and reaped a large harvest from this pleasure-seeking, floating population. His particular kind of entertainment appealed to all classes. Many of his feats were performed with cards, and he was an adept at every kind of trick. He

gave séances in club-rooms and in the private apartments of men about town, as well as in more equivocal places, and there was not a gambler whom he could not dupe, while every hostler and groom crowded into his tent to see him juggle in his mystifying sleight-of-hand performances.

The races were to last three days, and throughout their duration the grand route from Paris was recognisable from a distance by a long cloud of yellow dust thrown up by the wheels of vehicles of every description bringing visitors to and from Chantilly.

The *pelouse*, or race-course, a vast expanse of velvet turf, is one of the most beautifully situated in France. On two sides a noble forest screens it in; on a third it is fronted by the monumental stables, which, with their central dome and long wings ending in pavilions suggest rather the classic halls of some institution of learning than a rendezvous for race-horses. Two hundred and sixty can be accommodated in this equine palace, but its hospitality is not sufficient for the demand, and there are many great private stables belonging to various members of the nobility and other establishments for the entertainment and training of horses

scattered throughout the town. The grand ecuries were built in the last century by the Prince de Condé, whose lordly château, with its magnificent gardens and park, gives a charming vista on the fourth side of the race-course to the thousands of spectators who crowd its grand stands.

The Marquis de St. Angel was fond of fine horses, and on the first day of the races drove to Chantilly with the Marquise, Ludovic, and Ludovic's governess. While his father and mother were watching the races, Ludovic's governess took him to walk in the forest to the spot where the temporary buildings of the showmen had been erected. Ludovic, feeling the importance of his experience at the Fête des Loges, showed his governess about, and explained the different *divertissements*. He offered to treat her to a ride on the merry-go-round; but this the good woman declined, and she also restrained him when he wished to buy her a gingerbread pig. Suddenly Ludovic exclaimed, —

“But, Mademoiselle, here is the Escarpolette Diabolique where my father took me to see the basket-trick! and there is the very East Indian. It was wonderful; do come in and see it!”

The governess had not heard that the robbery of the necklace had occurred on the occasion of the Marquis's visit to this exhibition, and, arguing that it was allowable for her to go with Pierre where his father had already taken him, she readily consented to the boy's request.

As they were leaving the tent Ludovic felt a twitch at the pocket of his jacket, and, turning quickly, saw by the light from the lifted door-curtains a black dog scampering toward the back of the tent with something in his mouth. Clapping his hand to his pocket, and finding that his little purse was gone, he, without an instant's hesitation, ran after the dog. It wriggled under a loose portion of the side of the tent, and Ludovic, small and lithe, threw himself on all fours and followed just in time to see Zulu run up the steps and enter the open door of a roulette whose front almost touched the tent. Ludovic, fearless and resolute, and intent upon regaining his purse, which he supposed the dog had taken through mere play, sprang up the steps and saw Zulu lay the purse before a dirty little poodle which he did not at first recognise as his lost Popotte. But Popotte recognised her master, and in

her ecstasy broke the cord which bound her, nearly going mad in the wild exuberance of her joy. Her delight was convincing. Mangy, thin, blear-eyed, and unkempt, no other dog would have so leaped upon him, and barked its little heart out in a passion of frantic caresses; and Ludovic, in spite of the fact that Popotte in her present condition was a most unattractive object, lifted her in his arms, and, hugging her tight to his breast, ran as fast as he could to his governess. In his excitement he forgot his purse. He was sobbing for joy; and if a dog can weep, Popotte was crying too. They hurried to the race-track, escorted by Zulu, who hardly knew whether or not to approve of the turn which events had taken, and announced their discovery to the Marquis and his wife, who were watching the races from their carriage. The Marquise would not at first believe that this wretched beast was really the exquisite Popotte; but when she performed several of her old tricks at Ludovic's command, she also was convinced. The footman was ordered to take Popotte to the stables and wash her, and to inquire for a veterinary surgeon who could prescribe for her troubles. Ludovic went with the ser-

vant, for he could not be persuaded to leave his darling for an instant. "And drive off that strange dog," the Marquis called, as he observed that Zulu was following them. The footman threatened Zulu, and he ran away, but only in a circle, returning continually. "He will tire of following after a time if we pay no attention to him," said the footman, and they acted on this belief. Popotte's once beautiful hair was so matted that it was found necessary to shear her completely; and her emaciated little body was found to be seamed and scarred, where she had been cruelly beaten. After her bath she was wrapped in a fragment of a horse-blanket.

"To think that Popotte should be grateful for such a covering as this," said Ludovic,— "she who has as many toilettes as a fashionable lady. I was looking at her little coats only the other day. There was a yachting-costume of blue cloth with gold anchors; but merely going on board when the yacht was lying in harbour would make her seasick, and so we never took her on a cruise. When grandfather died and the whole family were put in mourning, Popotte had a little black velvet coat made, with our coat-of-

arms embroidered in silver. She looked like one of the funeral coach-horses in his black trappings. And when my sister was married Popotte wore a white satin mantle, and had a wreath of orange blossoms around her neck. Dear Popotte, you shall have them all again, and shall not be submitted to the indignity of that coarse blanket."

But Popotte cuddled down into the blanket, very well content with its warmth. It was the only covering she had had since she eloped with Zulu, and it seemed to her the utmost luxury. The surgeon treated Popotte, and gave the footman some medicaments with directions as to their use, and they returned with her to the Marquise. Here it was discovered that Zulu, who had made the rounds with them, had slunk under the carriage.

"He seems to be remarkably devoted to Popotte," said the Marquise; "but he will have to bid good-bye to his friend now, for he will soon tire of running behind when we start for home. Did you think to feed Popotte?"

This had been crowded from their minds by the other matters to which they had to attend; but though Ludovic had for-

gotten that his pet might be hungry, this fact had not been ignored by Zulu, who began now to forage among the baskets of the picnickers, and brought back a part of a cold roast pheasant, which he managed by leaping upon the steps to lay upon the carriage floor. This singular performance attracted the attention of the Marquis, and light began to break upon his mind.

"I believe," he said, "that this is the very dog that committed the thefts at St.-Germain. He was shown in the court-room, and actually stole the luncheon of one of the lawyers, and carried it to the gypsy."

"But you know that Pierre wrote us that the man who trained him to steal and who profited by his thefts was not Nagy Pal, but the prestidigitateur, in whose tent the robberies were committed."

"I have thought that this might be possible," the Marquis replied, "and I hoped that Pierre would attend the trial and testify; it was his failing to do so that convinced the detective that I employed that Pierre himself was a party to the crime."

"But, father," Ludovic exclaimed, "it was in the van of that very prestidigitateur that we found Popotte, and the black dog had

taken my pocket-book; that was what made me follow him."

"That puts a different aspect on affairs," said the Marquis; and he immediately drove to the police-station of the town, and demanded the arrest of Signor Stromboli. The agents descended upon the van, but found it locked and vacant, for the signor had an appointment at the hotel with a young count to whom he hoped to sell the ruby necklace, and Asoka was searching among the booths for the two poodles. The police found many stolen articles, and among them Ludovic's purse, which was promptly identified by the St. Angels. While they were standing before the tent and the police were within, Signor Stromboli returned. He came forward with cheerful alacrity at first, having noticed the elegant carriage and thinking that some aristocratic patron was looking for him. Zulu leaped upon him playfully, and the signor called Asoka to tie up the dog, for he feared that Zulu might practise some of his accomplishments upon his guests. But Asoka was not there, and while Signor Stromboli was asking politely to what he owed the honour of this visit, Zulu thrust his nose into the signor's

own pocket and drew out a morocco case, which the signor, manifestly alarmed, attempted to snatch from him. But a gendarme who was just coming out of the tent had noticed the action, and grasped the prestidigitateur by both arms, while Zulu curvetted wildly around the carriage, and finally leaped in and laid the casket before Popotte. The marquis opened it, and there, intact, blazed the royal rubies; and the gendarmes led Signor Stromboli away to prison to await his trial.

"You have expiated your share of the crime," said the Marquis, patting Zulu's head, "for you have made full reparation."

"And Pierre was right," Ludovic cried excitedly, "for it was really this bad man, and not the gypsy, who had mamma's necklace."

"Pierre was right, and Pierre is innocent," replied the Marquis; "but the next thing is to find him."

Alas! Pierre was far away in Brittany, and in great trouble. Only one friend of Pierre's had seen him led away by the detective in the direction of the police-staion. The lynx-eyed Adrienne had, as usual, taken in the entire situation. She

wriggled through the crowd to report Pierre's misfortune to Mademoiselle, but on her way she noticed that Minka stood by the church steps, waiting to see the procession of penitents, which was now approaching, each carrying his or her twinkling taper. The gorgeous beadle, in cocked hat and tricolour sash, marched first, waving his gold-headed cane like a drum-major. Then came the dear little choir boys in red petticoats and lace pinafores, swinging censers and holy-water pots, while the older choristers chanted, and the priest bore a processional cross, and a plumed violet velvet canopy was carried over the *pain bénit* by old sailors. The banner of the Virgin headed the company of the religieuses, whose white caps looked to Adrienne absurdly like a flock of geese marching with outspread wings. And now the first communion girls followed, all in white with floating veils like brides, and then penitents of every class, some walking painfully on their knees, some weeping, and some praying aloud. It was while they were passing into the church that Adrienne told Minka of Pierre's arrest. "And if you do not hide he will arrest you too," the girl added, and Minka felt that she spoke the

truth. The law had been cruel to her father, though he was innocent; and now it had seized upon dear, innocent Pierre. Surely there was no safety except in flight; but where could she go, on what friend call? "Go into the church with the others," counselled Adrienne, with something of the feeling that the church was a sanctuary for the hunted.

"They cannot seize you there. Stay until I come for you. I will find Mademoiselle, and come back and tell you what to do."

Minka fell in with the procession, and entered the church. She cowered in its darkest corner, just within the embrasure of a little chapel, kneeling because the others knelt and she did not wish to attract attention. She felt that she had no more in common with this company of pilgrims than a poor hare that might have crept in to get away from the dogs, though indeed no pilgrim among them had come from a greater distance or with a heart more deeply burdened than her own. She listened to the service, whose meaning she could not comprehend, though its solemnity impressed her. Then a young priest dressed in the garb of the Frères Prêcheurs in a robe of cream-coloured

cloth, its broad sleeves turned back from his shapely hands, a cowl falling upon the bent shoulders that proclaimed the scholar, rosary and crucifix at his belt, mounted the pulpit stairs. His face was plain, but it lighted up with a rapt expression as he spoke, and now Minka understood, for his words were simple and very earnest. He entreated his hearers to put away from them their darling sins.

“Why have you come to this Pardon?” he asked. “Because your hearts convict you of sin, because you can no longer bear its terrible load. You have borne it in secret for many days, as a death-smitten wretch bears in silence the agony of a cancer. No one has known; it was covered with satin and jewels. You have laughed and made merry with your friends, when the hateful thing was eating, eating its way into your life; but at last the anguish has become intolerable, and you cast yourself before the Great Physician entreating him to heal you. Alas! even he cannot do this without the knife. Cut away this sin, though your heart go with it; and in whatever sore trouble or dark perplexity you stand, I tell you that God himself will

appear for your help and will grant you his pardon and peace."

Minka knew nothing of the office of the confessional or of penance. No one had taught her even to pray; but the instinct of prayer is God-given, and in her case it found expression in a strange way. She repeated the old heathenish gypsy charm which her father had taught her, the charm which she believed bound and held Pierre, slowly *backward*, thus relinquishing her only joy in life, while she hoped that she transferred all of his trouble, the curse of the evil eye, to herself. Having performed what was for her a great reparation, she left the church with the same sense of having laid down her burden as the most earnest believer of them all. She no longer felt any cowardice, any instinct of flight, not because the danger was past in her case, but because it was inevitable. She might hide from the detective; she could not hide from the curse which she had called down upon herself. She was at peace, not because she had any hope that God would appear for her own help, but because she was sure he would take care of Pierre, and her conscience was at rest, for she had done her duty and she could now

look into his loving, truthful eyes without shame.

The priest stood upon the church steps. He had been giving away little religious engravings edged around with lace paper, and he handed one to Minka. It was a picture of Saint Anne, the patroness of the church, and a copy of Leonardo's painting of the mother of the Virgin holding Mary upon her knees, and looking with maternal pride and love as the Madonna holds out her arms yearningly to the Christ Child. It is a picture overflowing with affection, for Saint Anne embraces her daughter, whose face is full of the utmost devotion for her son, who in turn caresses a lamb.

Minka was not familiar with lambs, and she imagined that this little white curly animal was a poodle, and that the picture signified that Popotte would be given to her, just as the Infant Jesus seemed about to give it to Mary. She went directly to the police-station where Adrienne had said that Pierre had been taken, but she was hardly surprised when she was told there that he had been released and had gone away. She loitered for a few moments, expecting to be told that she was to be detained in his place;

but as nothing of the kind happened, she returned to the serpent-charmer's tent, at whose door she found Pierre the centre of a joyful group.

"Adrienne has gone after you," he said. "I have such good news, you never can guess."

"Oh, yes, I can; Popotte has been found."

"Yes; the Marquis de St. Angel has just telegraphed so to the photographer, who was going to arrest me; but he will not do so now, for they have found Signor Stromboli and the ruby necklace, and your father's innocence will be proved, and he will be set at liberty."

Minka nodded, not in the least surprised.

"And you are going back to the château?" she asked, as they walked away together. Her voice trembled, but she said it bravely.

"Yes, we must all go for a little while, the photographer says, to testify at the trial; and the Marquis and Monsieur Ludovic and my mother want to see me. Will you not go to the château with me, dear Minka, for they will want to see you too?"

"Yes," Minka replied simply. "Your will is my will now. I will do whatever you wish."

A great delight flushed the boy's face.

"And will you stay with the Marquise this winter and study music?"

"Yes, if my father will let me. It will not be hard for me to do so, since you are never coming back to us."

"I did not say that, Minka. I have promised to go away this winter for a trip to Africa with Professor Saumur to hunt wild beasts, and I would be glad to feel that you are safe with the Marquise; but when I come back I have decided to study to be a tamer of savage animals with the dompteur, and when I grow up I shall have a menagerie of my own, and I will buy a beautiful white horse and you shall ride on it, and we will travel just as we have done this summer, only we shall have a much prettier roulette, with lace curtains at the windows and a *jardinière* full of geraniums; and you will be my wife."

There was a look of great surprise as well as happiness on Minka's face as she said, "Why, the *good* part of the charm holds for both of us, for you are bound and so am I;

and my will is your will, and your will is mine."

"Even so, Minka, and we will have a little Eden of our own, with no serpent in it."

And then they heard Mademoiselle calling them to dinner. They were all to go to Paris the next morning by train, but the serpent-charmer wished to give a grand farewell performance, and to crowd the programme with her most startling feats.

"Pierre will open the exhibition with Rigolette's and Rigolo's bicycle and swing performances," Mademoiselle said. "Then I will dance with Coco, while Minka and Monsieur play. After that Minka may sing, and then I will give the tableau of the Medusa's Head. Here is the pipe which Asoka gave me. See if you can play like this while I am holding the pose, in order to excite the sleepy little snake he gave me. It has done nothing but doze in its cocoanut bed ever since I have had it, and I want it to be lively, and coil and dart like my other beauties. I have so much to do that it will help me very much if you will fasten the snakes to the fillet for me, Pierre, while Minka is singing, and then it will be ready

for me to bind around my hair just before my tableau."

Pierre complied with her wishes. He heard Minka singing "Roger Bontemps" as he lifted the swamp adder from its nest and fastened it to Mademoiselle's fillet, carrying out Signor Stromboli's dream of revenge on the very evening of his arrest.

The serpent had seemed chilled and dormant in Pierre's hands, but when Mademoiselle took her position, warmed by her throbbing temple and light hair, and awakened by the familiar notes of the pipe, the adder began to stir with the other snakes, and lifted its hooded neck higher than the rest. Professor Saumur was sitting with the photographer in the front row of seats, watching the tableau with intense interest. Suddenly his attention was attracted by the swamp adder. Frozen with terror, he watched it inflate its hood, and then swiftly strike where the blue veins crossed the white temple, and he uttered a cry of horror and fainted, for he knew that this was one of the most poisonous snakes of India.

But the terrible ending of Signor Stromboli's day-dream did not come true, for the reptile was, as Asoka had said, as little

dangerous as a kitten, and had been rendered so by Asoka himself. Whether he thought that he was fulfilling his master's desire, or suspecting his evil designs had determined to frustrate them, was never clearly proved, but, unknown to the signor, before giving the adder to Mademoiselle Tourbillon, Asoka had removed its poison sacs, and utterly innocuous it had struck against the smiling face in a transport of rage, as impotent as that of its giver.

Little remains to be said. Nagy Pal, liberated by the Marquis's efforts, was willing that his daughter should receive the education which the Marquise wished to bestow upon her, and consoled himself for her absence by marrying the serpent-charmer. He firmly refused to receive Zulu, who was also adopted by the Marquise, and in time took upon himself as luxurious habits and as aristocratic airs as if he had been born to the purple. He never, however, entirely gave up his bad habits of thieving. His morals had been corrupted by evil companionship. The rabbits in the park, and the contents of pockets in the drawing-room, were never safe if Zulu was near, and to his latest year he remained a shameless repro-

bate, but withal a very lovable one. It seemed almost as if in his case thieving was a virtue, since he knew nothing of the rights of property, and his thefts were always prompted by his love for Popotte.

Pierre sailed away with Professor Saumur, and remained with him not one winter alone but several, so that there is more prospect now of his becoming a naturalist than the proprietor of a menagerie.

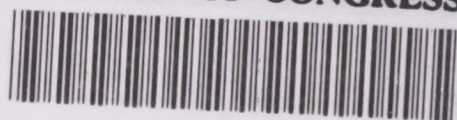
And will he ever come back and marry Minka? As for that we cannot say, since they are both still children. But when you come to France and see an especially clean and attractive roulette gay with flowers and white muslin curtains, then look sharply, and if you have eyes like Adrienne's you may discover Pierre and Minka on their wedding journey.







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